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**BENGAL IN THE REIGN OF AURANGZIB**  
**( 1658-1707 )**



BENGAL  
IN THE REIGN OF  
AURANGZIB  
1658-1707

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*With a foreword by*

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*TO*  
*MY FATHER*



## FOREWORD

Although not at the centre of political events, Bengal occupies a vital place in the ground-plan of the Mughal empire in the seventeenth century. Indeed, without Bengal Akbar's rule would not have attained imperial scale, not so much in terms of geography as in terms of resources. The revenue from Bengal and Gujarat ensured that the Mughal empire would live in History as altogether more grandiose as well as grand than the Delhi sultanate and that the achievement of Akbar would not be remembered as a temporary triumph of courage, imagination and will-power destined to crumble after his death because once again ordinary means and ordinary talents were once again joined together in government.

But Bengal was much more a source of revenue : it was a centre of fine manufactures and of essential materials for the making of war. With Gujarat, Bengal ministered to the magnificence of the Mughal élite ; with Gujarat it attracted traders and entrepreneurs from Europe who drew the Mughal empire further into a maritime economy. But the possession of Bengal could be a temptation to dangerous political adventure ; dangerous that is to the cohesion of the Mughal empire. Shah Shuja' was only the first of many Mughal governors who used Bengal to finance their own ambitions.

Dr Chatterjee's contribution to the study of Bengal under Aurangzeb may therefore be welcomed on many counts. Particularly useful is her study of the trade of the European companies in Bengal ; further work on the social consequences of those trading activities, on changes both in the structure and the personnel of the industries and crafts whose products were sought after by overseas merchants should be encouraged by her research. The data she includes on Bengal zamindars in the time of Aurangzeb is a useful addition to the growing body of material on their role in the Mughal empire ; the appreciation of this role is one of the most



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significant contributions of Indian scholarship to the study of the medieval period which have been made in the last decade. Men may still argue over whom and what were liberated in 1947, and from whom and from what ; the study of Indian history in the medieval period was certainly liberated.

*School of Oriental and African Studies,  
University of London  
June, 1967*

P. HARDY

## PREFACE

The aim of this work has been to survey the period beginning from 1658 to 1707. Few events in Aurangzib's reign, as the historians point out, are as impressive in their immediate effects as those which occurred in the first half century of Mughal rule in Bengal. Yet the period under review is by no means barren of momentous changes. In discussing the various topics, we have attempted to handle our sources in a critical and analytical spirit. Owing to their varied nature, and very large quantity, certain aspects have been treated in brief and because of the paucity of relevant facts and figures for our period, certain others have been merely touched on.

The war of succession that started in 1656 cast a dark shadow over Bengal in the shape of political disintegration. Even after Aurangzib's accession in 1658, this war did not end as far as Bengal was concerned. Out of this disruption there arose other troubles which marred all hopes of a peaceful government. Assam, the neighbouring country, seized this opportunity to hurl an attack on Bengal, and the Portuguese menace in Chittagong set the province in a panic. However, Bengal overcame these troubles and peace partially returned.

The Mughal administrative system in the period under review underwent very little change. Among the actual works of the Mughal period we have primarily to rely on the *Ā'in-i-Akbarī*, which gives us detailed accounts of the duties and functions of the Mughal grantees. The *Ā'in-i-Akbarī* is supplemented by the *Mir'āt-i-Aḥmadī* particularly in matters of administrative detail of a later age. It helps us to reconstruct a com-

plete picture of the administrative structure. No other problem of Mughal administration has presented so many difficulties as the land-revenue administration. This has been largely due to the profuseness of official documents scattered in the Libraries of India, Pakistan and Western countries.

W. H. Moreland's *Agrarian system of Moslem India* and Dr. Irfan Habib's recently published *Agrarian system of Mughal India* provide intelligent accounts of the principles governing the land revenue administration of the Mughals. The present writer is greatly indebted to them. But in the relevant chapter an attempt has been made to show the annual accounts of revenue collected and assessed in Bengal.

Contemporary foreign travellers speak in glowing terms about the commercial prosperity of Bengal which allured the Europeans to trade there. Dr. Abdur Rahim in his *Social and Cultural History of Muslim Bengal (1200-1576)* included a chapter on Bengal's commerce. Though his period is ostensibly limited to 1576 A.D., the date of the Mughal occupation, in fact he covers the period of Aurangzib. Consequently there are some common topics discussed in Dr. Rahim's relevant chapter and in the present work, and some overlapping has been inevitable. Dr. Rahim's book appeared at the moment when the present writer's draft of the thesis was ready.

It was this period which witnessed the development of the European trading companies, especially the English East India Company, in Bengal and this, no doubt has very significant results in the later period. The trade of the East India Company formed the most important factor in the economic and ultimately political history of Bengal in the eighteenth century.

The trade of Bengal flourished greatly in this period and the export of calicoes and taffetas spread the name of Bengal in the international market.

Society in our period shows no appreciable change. Nor did social life change its course. Dr. T. K. Raychaudhuri in his *Bengal under Akbar and Jahāngir* has mirrored an accurate picture of the society and social life of Bengal, which were as stationary and stereotyped in our period as they were in the first half century of Mughal rule in Bengal. Our relevant chapter can hope to add very little that is factually new to the work of Dr. Raychaudhuri. It may rightly be asked whether a chapter which cannot profess to contribute anything new and which must be written within the limits prescribed by already known evidence is really worth writing. To this contention it must be replied that this new study does not embody a change in content but a change in emphasis. Our period definitely shows some novelty especially in the activities of Christianity, a new force in the land, which was to have much greater influence in later centuries.

The sources utilised for preparing this thesis may be classified under four heads : (1) works in Persian, some in original manuscripts, and some in translations. (2) Records of the English East India Company, Letter Books, which consist of the letters of the Court of Directors to their agents in the Eastern Coast, (3) the accounts of contemporary European travellers and (4) available Bengali literature which can be applied to our period.

The contemporary Muslim chronicles form the most important sources of our information and are very valuable in many respects, but they suffer from some

serious drawbacks. Their vision seldom extended beyond the court, capital, the rulers and aristocracy and they hardly even noticed the people at large or gave any information about their lives, activities, social manners, customs and economic condition.

In studying the source materials of the Persian chronicles for the period under review a few facts are to be borne in mind. Firstly, the strictly contemporary Persian works dealing with Bengal are but few in number. Secondly, the Persian Chronicles can be divided into two categories, those written outside Bengal and those written in Bengal. The works written outside Bengal provide very little direct information of the life of the province. References may be made of a few of the important ones which mention Bengal.

*Zāfarnamā-i-‘Ālamgīrī*, in which author does not disclose his name, is a history of the first five years of Aurangzīb's reign. It gives us a detailed description of the period in which Aurangzīb succeeded in deposing his father. A few pages discuss the political action in Bengal during war of succession and Mīr Jumla's Assam Campaign. Muhammad Sāqī Mustai'dd *Khān's Maāsiri-i-‘Ālamgīrī* similarly gives us a history of the first ten years of Aurangzīb's reign and denotes a few pages on war of succession, Shujā's defeat and Mīr Jumla's Assam Campaign. Khāfi *Khān's Muntakhab-ul-Lubāb* deserves mention. In the second volume we find complete and connected account extant of the reign of Aurangzīb. Another to be mentioned is *‘Ālamgīrnāmā*—a history of the first ten years of Aurangzīb's reign. Its author Mūnshi Muḥammad Qāzim gave a detailed account of the conquest of Chittagong. Of those written within Bengal there is *Tawārīkh-i Shujā'* written

by *Shujā*'s old servant Muḥammad Masum, but it mostly recorded hearsays and stories about the war of succession. It is invaluable for Bengal occurrences but it ends abruptly on 18th April, 1666. *Ḥathiyā-i-ʿibriyā*, written by *Shihābuddin Tālīsh*, who was an eye-witness to Mīr Jumlā's Assam Campaign, throws light on Bengal's political and economic condition and helps us to get a picture of the first few years under Aurangzīb. A continuation of Tālīsh's writing gives us details of the conquest of Chittagong by *Shaistā Khān* and of *Shaistā Khān*'s activities in Bengal. It has been translated by J. N. Sarker in his *Studies in Mughal India*. Tālīsh's account is full of details but lacks in chronological order. Salīm Allāh's *Tawārikh-i-Bangāla*, written in 1763 by order of Tāhawwar Jang (Henry Vansittart, governor of Bengal from 1760-64) also supply valuable information on the political condition of Bengal from 1689 to 1756.

*Riyāḍ-al-Salāṭīn*, another history written in a later period on Bengal on the basis of Salīm Allāh's work also describes social and economic condition of Bengal and is somewhat useful.

Other Persian records of the Mughal empire such as letters, news reports and official manuals called *Dastur-al-ʿāmals* also claim importance.

The *Nīgar-Namāh-i-Munshi* is a collection of letters, official correspondence and administrative manuals, drafted on behalf of princes and nobles under the Mughals by one Munshi, known as Malik-Zadāh, as well as selected letters drafted by other well known Munshis, who were his contemporaries. In 1688 Malik Zādāh, who was at one time served as *Ṣadar* and *Darughāh-i-ʿAdalat* in Multan, compiled the *Nīgar-*

Namāh-i-Munshi, which throws interesting light on the working of the revenue administration of the Mughals.

What is most unfortunate is the total loss of the weekly, fortnightly and monthly news reports, known as the *Akhbārāt*, which could have helped to reconstruct the socio-economic condition of Bengal.

*Dastūr-al-ʿamals* provide important source material for Mughal administration. These are full of tables and figures of the central revenue, the number of provinces, *sarkārs* and *mahals*, the distances between important towns, military statistics and so on. But they do not furnish us with the annual accounts of revenue collected and assessed in Bengal. Yet the data available in them help us to construct a picture of revenue administration in Bengal. The *Khulāsat-al-Tawārikh* of Sujān Rai (*circa* 1695 A.D.) and the *Chahār Gulshan* of Rai Chetar Man Kayath (*circa* 1720 A.D.), which are translated by J. N. Sarkar in *India of Aurangzīb*, containing the statistical account of the Mughal empire may also be included in this category.

Contemporary documents of the English East India Company in Bengal such as the factory records which recorded the day to day transactions and developments of the Company's affairs in Bengal, letters from the Court of Directors to their Bengal Agents and the letters of the English Company's servants from Bengal to the Home authorities, form invaluable sources of information for the history of this period.

The records of the foreign travellers are indispensable for a picture of the socio-economic texture of Bengal. Their records may not be accurate in all cases, nevertheless they contain an epitome of information which if

carefully sifted provide materials for describing the structure of socio-economic life.

Literature is often the mirror of the age in which it flourishes. A poet or a novelist is bound to be influenced by the ideas and facts of contemporary life and this influence is reflected through his writings. For a study of Bengal's culture and social life, the study of contemporary Bengali literature is indispensable. Ketakadas's *Manasāmaṅgala*, Ruparam, Ghanaram, and Manikram's *Dharmamaṅgala Kāvya*s and Bharat Chandra's *Vidyāsundara* deserve mention.

Finally, I have great pleasure in acknowledging the help which I have received from several people in the preparation of this work. I wish to express my gratefulness to Dr P. Hardy, for his valuable supervision. To Prof. A. L. Basham I have to express my sincere gratitude for the time that he has found me and my problems in spite of his extreme business. I acknowledge with gratitude all kinds of help and guidance that I received from Dr. Riyazul Islam and Mr J. B. Harrison. I would also like to thank Mrs Patricia Nobel who kindly translated my Portuguese documents. I must also express my appreciation of the never-failing courtesey with which the staff of the School of Oriental and African Studies, the University Library, the British Museum and the India Office Library have met my requests. My sincere thanks to Progressive Publishers for painstaking care they have taken in publishing this book.



## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>B.M.A.M.</i>	British Museum Additional Manuscript
<i>B.M.O.M.</i>	British Museum Oriental Manuscript.
<i>B.M.M.M.</i>	British Muscum Marsden Manuscript.
<i>B.F.R.</i>	<i>Balasore Factory Records</i>
<i>C.F.R.</i>	<i>Calcutta Factory Records</i>
<i>D.F.R.</i>	<i>Dacca Factory Records</i>
<i>E.F.I.</i>	<i>English Factories in India</i>
<i>F.F.R.</i>	<i>Fort St. George Factory Records</i>
<i>H.F.R.</i>	<i>Hugli Factory Records</i>
<i>I.O.</i>	India Office, London
<i>J.A.S.B.</i>	<i>Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal</i>
<i>J.R.A.S.</i>	<i>Journal of Royal Asiatic Society</i>
<i>K.F.R.</i>	<i>Kasimbazar Factory Records</i>
<i>Muntakhab</i>	<i>Muntakhab u-Lubāb</i>
<i>P.F.R.</i>	<i>Patna Factory Records</i>
<i>R.O.C.</i>	<i>Records of Original Correspondence</i>
<i>S.F.R.</i>	<i>Surat Factory Records</i>

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The area called by the Mughal historians *Sūba-i-Bangālā* was incorporated into Akbar's dominion between 1576 and 1582 A. D. Before 1353 the term *Bangālā* did not denote an area with precisely known political and administrative boundaries. It is therefore necessary to define historically what the Mughals understood by *Sūba-i-Bangālā* both before and during Aurangzib's time.

The lands included within the area of *Sūba-i-Bangālā* find mention in the great epic *Mahābhārata*, Kalidasa's *Raghuvamśa* and in the epigraphic records of the Guptas. In the *Mahābhārata* and in *Raghuvamśa* we find that *Vaṅga* is a country to the east of the Gangetic delta,<sup>1</sup> and *Paṇḍravardhana* is a country bounded on the west by the Ganges with the Mahananda and on the east by the Karotoya.<sup>2</sup> The Meharauli inscription of Chandra, the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta, the Mallarasul plate and of other Gupta epigraphs prove that *Vaṅga*, *Samatāṭa*, (whose exact limits are not known) *Paṇḍravardhana* and *Vardhamānabhukti*<sup>3</sup> (which embraced the valley of the Damodar river) formed an important part of the Gupta empire.

In the seventh century Bāṇabhaṭṭa's *Harṣacharita* mentions that Śaśāṅka was the king of Gauda and his

<sup>1</sup>Ed., R. C. Majumdar, *History of Bengal*, vol. I, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>Prabhas Chandra Sen, *Bagurar Itihasa*, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>The bhukti in Gupta times was the biggest province within the kingdom.

capital was Karnaśuvarṇa,<sup>4</sup> identified with Rangamaṭi, six miles south of west Baharampur in the Murshidabad district. There has been considerable divergence of opinion about the present location of Gauḍa. Gauḍa was originally the name of a city in Malda district lying on the east bank of the Bhagirathi.<sup>5</sup> The *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* defines Gauḍa as a territory lying to the north of Burdwan and south of the Padma,<sup>6</sup> i.e., a tract which included the modern division of Burdwan, Birbhum, Nadia and Murshidabad district. It seems that the name Gauḍa was applied more strictly to the surrounding region rather than to the city itself. From the seventh century to the twelfth century the name Gauḍa was used in a wider sense to cover the area which was eventually known as *Bangālā* in the later Muslim period. Thus the literary works of the Hindu period use the general name of Gauḍa for the bigger principalities of Bengal.<sup>7</sup> But the boundaries of Gauḍa changed from time to time. The two Medinipur records of Śaśāṅka state that the boundary of Gauḍa extended in his time as far south as the Chilka lake in Orissa.<sup>8</sup>

During the reign of the Pālas, the area of Gauḍa was enlarged. Paundravardhanabhukti which was the biggest administrative division of the Gauḍa empire extended from the summit of the Himalayas in the north to Khāḍi in the Sundarban region in the south. The Vardhamānabhukti extended towards the east as far as the Hugli river. Its southern boundary reached to the lower reaches

<sup>4</sup>Ed. R. C. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

<sup>5</sup>H. Beveridge, *J. A. S. B.*, LXIII, Part I, p. 81.

<sup>6</sup>Ed. R. C. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>7</sup>See *I. H. Q.*, 1952, vol. xxviii, pp. 219-221. Dr. Dani refers to work of Rayamukuta Bṛhaspati.

<sup>8</sup>N. R. Roy, *Bangalir Itihasa*, p. 153.

of the Suvarṇarekha and the northern boundary beyond the river Ajay.<sup>9</sup>

From about the middle of the twelfth century the Sena Kings gradually encroached on the territories of the Pālas and eventually ousted them from Gauḍa. Vijaya-sena, the first king of the Sena dynasty after conquering *Varendra*, a neighbouring country of *Vaṅga*, founded a new capital on the northern bank of the Ganges and named it Vijayapura. The dominion of Vallalasena, son of Vijaya-sena, comprised five provinces,<sup>10</sup> *Rāḍha*, the country west of the Hugli river and south of the Ganges, *Bagdi*, the delta of the Ganges and Brahmaputra, *Vaṅga*, the country to the east of the delta, *Varendra* or *Paunḍravardhana*, the country to the north of the Padma and between the Karatoya and the Mahananda rivers and *Mithila*, the country west of the Mahanadi.<sup>11</sup> The territory of Gauḍa extended far wider, as we find from the Madhyapaḍa plate of Viśvarūpasena, Paunḍravardhanabhukti stretched its eastern boundary to the sea, apparently the Bay of Bengal and the estuary of the Meghna.<sup>12</sup> *Rāḍha* was divided into two parts *Uttara Rāḍha* and *Dakṣiṇa Rāḍha*. *Uttara Rāḍha* embraced modern Birbhum district and the northern borders of the Burdwan district and Kandi subdivision of Murshidabad district. *Dakṣiṇa Rāḍha* embraced considerable portions of western Bengal. It lay between the Ajay and the Damodar river.<sup>13</sup>

However, in 1203 A. D., towards the end of the Sena rule in Gauḍa, the *Khaljī* Chief Muḥammed bin

<sup>9</sup>Ed., R. C. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 211-216.

<sup>11</sup>The identification proposed by A. Cunningham in *Archaeological Survey Reports*, (vol. xv., pp. 145-46) is now generally accepted.

<sup>12</sup>Ed., R. C. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

Bakhtyār Khaljī invaded Lakṣmaṇa Sena's kingdom and by 1206 Khaljī arms had penetrated it. Consequently the south eastern part of Mithila, Varendra, the northern portion of Rāḍha and the north west tract of Bagdi came under the possession of Bakhtyār Khaljī. The *Tābaqat-i-Nāsiri* of Minhāj-i-Sirāj states that Bakhtyār Khaljī left the city of Nadia in desolation and he made Lakhnauti his seat of government.<sup>14</sup> Lakhnauti is identified with Gauḍa. According to Minhāj Lakhnauti was on the bank of a river. M. M. Chakravarti refers to Gastaldi's map (A. D. 1561) which shows Gauḍa's situation on the west of the Ganges. Minhāj further writes that the territories of Lakhnauti had two wings on either side of the river Gang, *Rāl* and the city of *Lakhnor* on the western side and *Vārind* on the eastern,<sup>15</sup> and Baṅg was ruled by the descendant of Lakṣmaṇasena. In fact, Bakhtyār Khaljī's principality was limited to a small tract of land round about Lakhnauti. In 1214 A. D. Ghiyāth al dīn Iwad Khaljī made an attempt to extend the frontiers towards the south and east.<sup>16</sup> He conquered Lakhnor which is identified with Nagar in Birbhum district.<sup>17</sup> But the possession of Lakhnor was lost during the governorship of Malik Izzāldīn Tughral Tughan Khān in 1244 A. D.<sup>18</sup> However, the Governor of Bengal, Sultān Mughith al dīn Yūzbak entered into war against Orissa in 1253 A. D., and enlarged his southern frontier up to Umardan, identified with Madaran in the Hughly district.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Minhāj-i-Siraj, *Tābaqat-i-Nāsiri* (printed text), p. 151.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 143-44.

<sup>17</sup> Ed., J. N. Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, vol. II., p. 37.

<sup>18</sup> Minhāj-i-Siraj, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 265

The small tract of *Bakhtyār Khaljī* gradually extended towards east into Dacca region under *Mughith al dīn Tughrīl*, who was appointed the governor of *Iqlīm Lakhnauti* and *Bāngalā* in 1268 A. D.<sup>20</sup> The two territorial terms occur in Barani's *Tarikh-i-Firūz Shāhī*. Here *Bāngalā* signifies eastern and southern *Bāngalā* which lay outside the Muslim territory of *Lakhnauti*.<sup>21</sup> For Barani uses three phrases *Arsāh Bāngalā*, *Iqlīm Bāngalā* and *Dīyār Bāngalā*. A. H. Dani refers to Dr. K. R. Qanungo, who identifies *Arsāh Bāngalā* with Satgaon region, and *Iqlīm Bāngalā* with Sonargaon territory.<sup>22</sup>

But in the case of *Dīyār Bāngalā* Barani makes it clear that it implies both the territories of Sonargaon and Satgaon which were in course of time brought under imperial control by *Tughluq Shāh*.<sup>23</sup>

During the early period of Muhammad bin Tughluq's reign, we find that there were three divisions of *Bāngalā*,<sup>24</sup> *Dīyār-i-Sonargaon* comprising eastern Bengal,<sup>25</sup> *Dīyār-i-Satgaon*, comprising western Bengal, *Dīyār-i-Lakhnauti*, comprising northern and central Bengal. About the middle of Muhammad bin Tughluq's reign a rebellion broke out in Bengal resulting in its separation and independence from the Sultanate of Delhi.

In 1342 A.D. *Shāmsuddīn Ilyās Shāh* came to the throne of *Lakhnauti*. He gradually conquered the other two parts of *Bāngalā* and united them under his overlordship. Hence, the original Muslim Kingdom of *Lakhnauti* expanded and it was known as the Kingdom of

<sup>20</sup> *Ziā-ud-dīn Barani, Tarikh-i-Firūz Shāhī*, (Printed text), p. 82.

<sup>21</sup> A. H. Dani, "Shamsuddin Ilyās Shāh, *Shāh-i-Bāngalāh*" *Jadunath Sarkar Commemoration Volume*, 1956, p. 54.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ziā-ud dīn Barani, op. cit.*, P. 461, *Yahyā ibn Ahmad Sihrindi, Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shāhī* (Printed text) P. 98.



*Bāngalā*. The use of the word *Pang-ko-la*, *Bāngalā* and *Bengala* in the Chinese, Muslim and European sources of the medieval period respectively can be traced only from the time of *Shāmsuddin Ilyās Shāh*. Thus before *Shāmsuddin Ilyās Shāh*'s reign, the term *Bāngalā* had not been used in a wider sense. The popular use of the phrase *Gauḍa Bāngalā* is to be found in the chronicles of the early Mughal period.<sup>26</sup>

However, under the *Hūsain Shāhī* dynasty (1493-1538) the Kingdom of *Bāngalā* was more extensive. *Hūsain Shāh*'s dominions comprised all the territories bounded by Saran and Bihar on the north west, Sylhet and Chittagong on the south west, Hajo on the north west and Madaran and 24 parganas on the south west.<sup>27</sup>

In the days of Sher Shah ( 1538-43 A. D. ) *Bāngalā* was again divided but the names of its parts are not known. The whole of Orissa was conquered and annexed to *Bāngalā* in the reign of *Sūlaimān Karrani*, the last but one independent Afghan King in *Bāngalā*. *Bāngalā* became for a time the dominating power in north eastern India from the Kuch frontier to Puri in Orissa and from the Son to the Brahmaputra.<sup>28</sup>

*Bāngalā* continued within these territorial limits until the Mughal emperor Akbar came to the throne. Gradually the Mughal army encroached into the territory of

<sup>26</sup> See for detail A. H. Dani, *op. cit.*, 51 ff.

<sup>27</sup> *Humāyūnnamā* of Gulbadan Begam describes that "Hūmāyūn marched against Shir Khān who made a gesture of submission. Humāyūn was considering this when the King of Gauḍa *Bāngalā* came wounded and a fugitive. For this reason he gave no attention to Shir Khān but marched towards Gauḍa *Bāngalā*".

—Translation of *Humāyūnnamā* by  
A. S. Bevridge, pp. 133-38.

<sup>28</sup> Ed. J. N. Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, vol. II., pp. 150-51.

<sup>29</sup> Ed. J. N. Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

Bāngalā and occupied it. But Chittagong in the east did not come under Mughal possession until 1666 A. D.

However, in 1582 the nineteen *sarkārs* which were listed in Todar mal's assessment came to be known as *Sūba-i-Bangālā*. These nineteen *sarkārs*<sup>29</sup> (administrative units) of *Sūba-i-Bangālā*, listed below, included the present day Bengal districts noted against them :—

1. *Sarkār Purnia*—This *sarkār* comprised only the central portion of the district of the same name.

2. *Sarkār Audambar alias Tanda*—It stretched from the southern boundary of the preceding *sarkār* southwards across the Ganges all along the right bank of that river down to the city of Murshidabad on the one hand, and through nearly the whole of the Birbhum district on the other.

3. *Sarkār Sharifabad*—It extended from a point close to the northern end of the Birbhum district to the southern boundary of that of Burdwan, embracing portions of the districts of Murshidabad, Birbhum and Burdwan.

4. *Sarkār Sulaimanabad*—Most of this *sarkār* lay in the southern part of the Burdwan and the northern part of the Hugli districts. But a large portion lay to the east of the Hugli river in the Nadia district, much mixed up with the *sarkārs* of Satgaon and Madaran.

5. *Sarkār Satgaon*—This *sarkār* which was cut up into two portion by mahals belonging to *sarkār* Sulaimanabad, lay principally on the east of the Hugli river in the modern districts of the twenty-four parganas and Nadia.

6. *Sarkār Mandaran*—It was a long straggling strip of territory running from Birbhum in the north to the junction of the Hugli and Rupnarayan rivers in the south.

<sup>29</sup>Identification of these nineteen sarkars has been taken from John Beames "Notes on Akbar's Subah" Journal of *Royal Asiatic Society*, 1896, pp. 88-135.

7. *Sarkār Tajpur*—It included all eastern Purnia and the western half of Dinajpur.

8. *Sarkār Lakhnauti or Jannatabad*—It extended from Teliagadhi including a few mahals belonging to modern Bhagalpur, Purnia and the whole of Malda district.

9. *Sarkār Barbakabad*—It covered the greater part of the modern district of Rajshahi and part of Malda, Dinajpur and Murshidabad.

10. *Sarkār Mahmudabad*—It included one *parganā* of the Murshidabad district, all the northern part of Nadia and Jessore and a portion of Pabna and Faridpur.

11. *Sarkār Khalifatabad*—It comprised the district of Khulna, with portions of Bakherganj, Nadia and 24-parganas.

12. *Sarkār Panjra*—It comprised the western half of Dinajpur and constituted the northern end of the Sūba-i-Bangālā.

13. *Sarkār Ghoraghat*—It lay in the Rangur, Dinajpur Pabna and Mymensing districts. The country lying to the north east of the Karotoya river and comprised in the district of Rangpur was not fully conquered till the reign of Aurangzīb. At the time of the compilation of the lists in the *Ā'in* it was for the most part independent.

14. *Sarkār Bazuha*—It included nearly the whole of Mymensingh district, parts of Dacca, Pabna, Bogra and Rajshahi district.

15. *Sarkār Fathabad*—It was adjacent to *sarkār Bazuha* on the south and included parts of the Dacca, Faridpur and Bakherganj districts.

16. *Sarkār Bakla*—It comprised portions of Bakherganj and Dacca district.

17. *Sarkār Sylhet*—This frontier *sarkār* lay very far to

the north east, beyond the furthest limits even of the great *Sarkār* of Bazuha.

18. *Sarkār Sonargaon*—This *sarkār* extended from the north of the Dacca district to the Feni river and the large islands at the mouth of the Ganges. How far it extended to the east is not known. Most of the present district of Tripura was under independent *Rajas*.

19. *Sarkār Chatgāon*—This *sarkār* was not conquered till the reign of Aurangzib about 1666 A.D.

The division of the *sarkārs* reminds us of the *bhuktis* of Hindu period. The *bhukti* also consisted of lesser divisions called *Viṣayas* like *parganās* of the *sarkār*. Under the Pāla and Sena dynasties nine *bhuktis* formed an integral part of their kingdom. Paṇḍravardhana was an important *bhukti* as we find from the inscriptions and the plates of the Hindu period. According to Hiuen Tsang's accounts Paṇḍravardhana lay between Kajangala and the river Karotoya. If Kajangala is identified with Rajmahal, the area of Paṇḍravardhana extended from Rajmahal-Ganges-Bhagirathi to the river Karotoya which covered modern Bagura and Dinajpur district. We find that Dinajpur lay into the *sarkārs* of Tajpur, Barbakabad and Bazuha, and Bogra lay in the *sarkār* Bazuha only. Hence the area which used to form the part of *sarkār* Tajpur, Barbakabad and Bazuha in Mughal times was roughly equivalent to that known as Paṇḍravardhana in the Hindu period. Similarly, all the five regions of Rāḍha, Varendra, Vaṅga, Bagdi and Mithila which were co-extensive with the territorial limits of the Sena dynasty are found in the nineteen *sarkārs* of Todar Mall's assessment.

However, in 1607, in the reign of Jahāngir, Bihar was created a separate governorship under Islām Khān and this division continued until 1697. In 1612 Kamrup was

conquered and it became part and parcel of Sūba-i-Bangālā.<sup>30</sup>

Under Shāh Jahān, the boundaries of Bengal were extended in the south west through Midnapur and Hijli<sup>31</sup> having been attached to Bangālā, and in the east and north east by conquest in Tripura and Koch Hajo.<sup>32</sup>

As Shāh Jahān found that the sea coast of southern and western Bāngalā was not safe from the ravages of the Portuguese pirates, he created two *faujdārīs*, Hijli and Bandar Balasore on the sea coast. According to his instruction a few mahals (small revenue unit) were detached from four *sarkārs* of Orissa. Seventeen mahals were taken from *sarkār* Maljhita, seven from *sarkār* Jallesor and four mahals from *sarkār* Mujkuri to create Hijli *faujdārī*. The *faujdārī* of Bandar Balasore was formed by taking a few mahals from *sarkār* Ramna, *sarkār* Basta and *sarkār* Mujkuri of Orissa. From that time onwards the *faujdārīs* of Hijli and Balasore were annexed to Bangālā.<sup>33</sup> In 1646, according to the order of Shah Shujā', the *nawāb* of Sūba Bangālā, six *sarkārs* of Orissa viz., *Sarkār Jellisor*, *Sarkār Mujhkuri*, *Sarkār Maljhita*, *Sarkār Goalpara*, *Sarkār Ramna* and *Sarkār Basta* were divided into two parts.<sup>34</sup> Those parts which were attached to Bangālā were known as *Qismat Sarkār* and comprised (1) *Goalpara Qismat*—including Tamluk and some other small interior districts, (2) *Sarkār Maljhita Qismat*—including Hijli, Jalamutah, Deradun, Mahisadal, (3) *Sarkār Mujh-*

<sup>30</sup>Tr. M. I. Borah, *Bahāristān-i-Ghaybi*, vol. I, p. 252.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 636.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 537-538, 672.

<sup>33</sup>James Grant, "Analysis of the Finances of Bengal", *Fifth Report of the House of Commons* vol. 1, pp. 246-47.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*

*kurī Qismat* including Balasi with some districts in the vicinity of Balasore, (4) *Sarkār Jellasor Qismat*, including Havili together with Birkul, (5) *Sarkār Ramna*—including Suhent, (6) *Sarkār Basta Qismat*, including the lands in the neighbourhood of the port of Balasore as far as the southern extremity of the Nilgiri hills of Orissa. In addition to these *sarkārs* Shāh Shujā' created nine more *sarkārs* from the newly conquered territory; these were (1) *Sarkār Kuch Bihar*, forming chiefly the modern province of Rangpur, (2) *Sarkār Bangalbhum*, consisting of two *parganās* of Bahir band and Bhitarband, between Rangpur and the Brahmaputra, (3) *Sarkār Dakhinkole*—on the eastern and opposite-side of the Brahmaputra, including Kuribari, (4) *Sarkār Dhekri*—on the frontiers of Assam including Keybari, (5) *Sarkār Kamrup*—adjoining the north of *Sarkār Bangalbhum* on the west and north side of the Brahmaputra, extending to Khontaghat on the modern frontiers of Assam and including a great deal of modern Rangamati and Bisni. (6) *Sarkār Udehpur*—including the whole of Tripura area (7) *Sarkār Mūrad Khana*—the Sundarban region. (8) *Sarkār Peshkash*—so known because of a fixed tribute (*Peshkash*) levied on frontier chiefs who by paying the tribute could keep their territorial administration in their own hands. In *Sūba-i-Bangālā* such chiefs were those of Bishnupur, Pachet and Chandrokona. These territories were on the western frontier of *Sarkār Mandaran*. (9) *The Mint*—containing two mahals from Dacca and Rajmahal.

Thus Sultān Shujā' added fifteen new *sarkārs* to Todar Mall's nineteen. *Sūba-i-Bāngalā* therefore contained thirtyfour *sarkārs* when Aurangzib came to the throne of Delhi. This continued until Chittagong was added to *Bangālā* in 1666, and Kamrup was lost in 1671.

## CHAPTER II

### POLITICAL BACKGROUND

*Shāh Shūjā'* was the *sūbadār* of Bengal between 1639 and 1658 A. D. Under him peace prevailed in Bengal. But that peace was disturbed by the noise of a "martial kettledrum,"<sup>1</sup> when the news of *Shāh Jahān's* illness reached Bengal.<sup>2</sup> In Mughal India there was no hard and fast rule of succession for the royal throne. There were endless intrigues to secure the coveted succession, often entailing rebellions and cruel murders.

Of *Shāh Jahān's* sons *Shāh Shūjā'* was the first to rebel. He had indeed received a report of his father's recovery but had refused to believe it. He thought that it was his brother *Dārā Shukoh's* trick to gain time against him. Having considerable resources, a numerous army, and the acquiescence of his subjects, he advanced on Patna.<sup>3</sup> *Allāhwardi Khān*, the governor of Bihar, fell in with *Shujā'*.<sup>4</sup> After overrunning the province of Bihar on his way, the Prince arrived near Benares by the river route, where he found his path blocked by an imperial army sent from Agra under *Dārā's* eldest son *Sulaimān Shūkoh* and the Rajput veteran *Mirzā Raja Jai singh Kachhwā*.<sup>5</sup> *Jai singh*, whom

<sup>1</sup> Charles Stewart, *History of Bengal*, p. 255.

<sup>2</sup> *Māasir-i-Ālamgīrī*, pp. 2-3, '*Ālamgīrnamā*', p. 27. *Muntakhab*, vol. II., p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Māasir-i-Ālamgīrī*, p. 4., '*Ālamgīrnamā*', p. 29., *Muntakhab*, vol. II., p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Hasan Askari "Bihar under Aurangzib", J.B.R.S., 19, p. 251.

<sup>5</sup> Muhammad Masum, *Tārīkh-i-Shāh-Shūjā'*, I.O.MS. No 543, fol. 145.

the emperor *Shāh Jahān* had requested to arrange peace between the two brothers, sent a letter to *Shujā'*. *Shujā'*, realising that it was difficult to keep the fact of his father's recovery from his soldiers, concluded peace with Jai singh and *Sūlaimān* and agreed to return to Bengal. But *Sūlaimān* treacherously attacked *Shujā'*'s camp at night, causing the loss of over fifty lakhs of rupees. This attack too played havoc with the army which now fled by land along the route through Saseram to Patna. This happened on the 4th February, 1658, at Bahadurpur near Benares.<sup>6</sup> *Sūlaimān*'s army still followed *Shujā'*, who retreated to Mungir and shut himself up in the fort there.<sup>7</sup> In the meantime *Sūlaimān* received a letter from his father *Dārā*, who asked him to patch up peace with his uncle and hasten to the west to assist him against the joint forces of *Mūrad* and *Aurangzīb*.<sup>8</sup> The treaty was signed in May 1658.

Meanwhile, *Shujā'* heard the news of *Dārā*'s defeat, the imprisonment of his father and the usurpation of the throne by his brother *Aurangzīb*.<sup>9</sup> After much consideration he sent a letter of congratulation to *Aurangzīb*.<sup>10</sup> *Aurangzīb* too sent a letter to *Shujā'*, saying "As you had often before begged the emperor *Shāh Jahān* for the province of Bihar, I now add it to your viceroyalty. Pass some time peacefully in administering it and repairing your broken power. Like a true brother I shall not refuse you anything that you desire, be it land or money."<sup>11</sup> In 1659 in spite of his brother's affectionate

<sup>6</sup> J. N. Sarkār, *Studies in Aurangzīb's reign*, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> *Ālamgīrnamā*, p. 37.

<sup>8</sup> *Māasir-i-Ālamgīrī*, p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> *Muntakhab*, vol. II., pp. 32-39.

<sup>10</sup> Ed. J. N. Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, vol. II, p. 337.

<sup>11</sup> Letter quoted in Sarkar's *History of Bengal*, p. 337.



letter *Shujā'* marched from Bengal with a numerous army.<sup>12</sup> He had learnt of the flight of his elder brother *Dārā* and his pursuit by Aurangzib and thought that the imperial capital, being denuded of the main armies of the chief contestants for the throne, could be easily captured.<sup>13</sup> What is more important, *Shujā'* had much support from his officers, who were inclined to take desperate decisions and willing to face the probable consequences. When *Shujā'* had arrived at Allahabad and crossed the Ganges without opposition to proceed to *Khajwā*, he faced the royal army under Aurangzib's son Muḥammad. But *Shujā'* was defeated in the battle of *Khajwā* on 5th January 1659, and driven back to Bengal.<sup>14</sup>

The situation forced *Shujā'* to escape again to Mungir. He took shelter there because of its natural fortifications. The hills of Mungir comprise a number of low ranges and isolated peaks.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, *Shujā'* himself had made fortifications there. He started collecting an army in the neighbourhood which commands the pass Telliagiri into Bengal. On the other hand, Prince Muḥammad, soon joined by Mīr Jumla<sup>16</sup> proceeded slowly towards Mungir along the banks of the Ganges.<sup>17</sup> The pressure of imperial force and the treachery of Raja Bahroz of Kharagpur and *Khwājā Kāmal*, the Afghan *Zamindār* of Birbhum, on whom *Shujā'* had relied to a great extent

<sup>12</sup> *Muntakhab*, vol. II. p. 45.

<sup>13</sup> *Ālamgīrnamā*, p. 224.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p. 224.

<sup>15</sup> L. S. S. O'Malley, Mungir District Gazetteer, p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> From *Māasir-ul-Umāra*, vol. III, p. 530, it appears that Mīr Jumla joined Prince Aurangzib who was then in the Deccan. Mīr Jumla's titles were Muazzam Khān, Khān-i-Khānan Sipahsalar.

<sup>17</sup> *Zāfarnamā*, B.M.A.M., No. 26, 234, fol. 60b., *Māasir-i-Ālamgiri*, p. 21.

for his defensive measures, forced him to abandon Mungir (6th March, 1659) which now passed into Mīr Jumla's hands.<sup>18</sup> *Shujā'* also lost Birbhum before 27th of March, 1659.<sup>19</sup> He broke camp at night and crossed the river to reach Tanda. Mīr Jumla, afraid of an ambush, dared not follow him. The monsoon rains also set in on the very night of *Shujā'*'s flight and consequently Mīr Jumla could not proceed further. Moreover, with Tanda as his chief base and being strongly entrenched along the eastern bank of the Ganges, opposite the entire Mughal front stretching from Rajmahal to Suti, *Shujā'* was still a factor to reckon with, particularly because of his artillery, which consisted of big pieces manned by the Portuguese and the half-bred *Mestiços*.<sup>20</sup> Mīr Jumla felt powerless before the great Bengal flotilla. Meanwhile, Prince Muḥammad, who was engaged to *Shujā'*'s daughter Gulrukh Banū, left the royal army with the intention of joining *Shujā'*.<sup>21</sup> When this news reached Delhi Aurangzīb inferred that the whole army in Bengal had gone over to *Shujā'*. Without delay the emperor marched from Delhi to Allahabad to be within easy reach of Bengal in case anything worse should happen there.<sup>22</sup> Mīr Jumla, who was trying to suppress *Shujā'* with his troops from the side of Makṣūṣābād (later Murshidabad) and Akbarnagar (Rajmahal) continued his efforts for *Shujā'*'s expulsion from the right side of the river. Dāud Khān Quraishī, the governor of Bihar, was selected for the attack from the riverside. On 14th May, 1659, Dāud, having received

<sup>18</sup> *Muntakhab*, vol. II, p. 75.

<sup>19</sup> *Ālamgīrnamā*, p' 225.

<sup>20</sup> Ed. J. N. Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 339

<sup>21</sup> *Māasir-i-Ālamgīrī*, p. 27, *Muntakhab*, vol. II, p. 90.

<sup>22</sup> *Muntakhab*, vol. II, p. 90, *cf.* J. N. Sarkar, *History of Aurangzīb*, vol. v., p. 58.

the imperial orders to cross the Ganges, marched upon Tanda.<sup>23</sup> On 27th December, 1659, he crossed the Ganges and advanced across the Kosi river in the face of stiff opposition from *Shujā*'s army. The enemy were routed and the chief *Jāmal* was killed.<sup>24</sup>

*Shujā*' on this news fell back on Tanda. Shortly afterwards *Mir Jumla* received fresh help from the emperor, who sent money as well as artillery led by *Dilir Khān*.<sup>25</sup> *Dilir Khān* after crossing the Ganges soon joined *Dāud Khān*. *Mir Jumla* decided to attack *Shujā*' from the North East. The plan had been well worked out, and *Rajmahal* was recaptured. *Rasūl Beg* was put in charge of it. *Shujā*' continued to make desperate attempts to stop the onrush of the imperialists but the superior force of *Mir Jumla* compelled him to abandon Tanda on the 7th April, 1660, and flee to Dacca.<sup>26</sup> But the *zamindārs* of Dacca rose against him. In the meantime, *Mir Jumla* arrived there and *Shujā*' finally abandoned Bengal on 22nd May, 1660, and sailed for Chittagong to seek help from the Magh Raja of Arakan.<sup>27</sup> Aurangzib's only opposition in Bengal was thus removed.

The political condition of Bengal before Aurangzib's accession was thus very unsettled. From one end to the other, Bengal faced severe turmoil which caused great damage to the life of the common people. Disorder stalked the entire province. At this juncture the *nizamat* of Bengal was bestowed upon *Mir Jumla*.<sup>28</sup>

Though Aurangzib had great confidence in the ability

<sup>23</sup> *Ālamgīrnamā*, p. 226.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>27</sup> *Muntakhab*, vol. II, p. 107.

<sup>28</sup> *Māasir-i-Ālamgīrī*, p. 32.

of Mīr Jumla, he was not without anxiety regarding *Shujā'*. Mīr Jumla's letter to the Dutch Director Matheus Van den Broecke, dated 27th October, 1660, expressed that anxiety "...His Majesty will not fail in gratitude and will grant you in all parts of his dominions far greater privileges than the English enjoy at present...The service we demand from you is this—when Sultan Chouse (Shuja) being in Arracan requests you to help him escape to Persia or Mocha in one of your vessels you will take him on board and deliver him here in Hugli in the power of the King. No harm can result to you from this action. I have also obtained many *farmans* for you from the King. His Majesty now expects this service from you in return."<sup>29</sup> There is no evidence that *Shujā'* was brought back to Hugli by the Dutch ship.

Bengal had suffered much during the first two years of Aurangzib's reign. The war of succession had drifted on expensively in Bengal. Before Bengal could recover from this disaster, she had to cope with trouble from Assam and Kuch Bihar adjoining her north western limits. The people who lived in this tract were the Ahoms. They were of Mongoloid origin and had migrated from their original home in 'upper Burma and occupied a part of the Brahmaputra valley as early as the thirteenth century A.D. Gradually their territories extended up to the Barnadi river in the north west and the Kalang river in the south west.<sup>30</sup> The eastern limit of the Mughal empire had also been extended up to the Barnadi river.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, conflict started between the Mughals and the Ahoms. Peace was however concluded in 1637

<sup>29</sup>Hague Transcript, First series, vol. XXIV, P.D.C. LXI.

<sup>30</sup>E. Gait, *A History of Assam*. p. 50.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

during *Shāh Jahān's* reign through the subjugation of Koch Hajo and Kamrup.<sup>32</sup> But the war of succession gave the Ahoms an opportunity to occupy Kamrup in 1658.

Bhim Narayan, a *zamindār* of Kuch Bihar, stopped paying tribute to the Mughals and invaded Kamrup. This encouraged the Assam King Jayadhwaj Singh to lead an expedition to Kamrup.<sup>33</sup> Lūtfullāh *Shīrazī*, the royal *faujdār* of Kamrup, was too weak to repulse the attack and Kamrup was captured by the Ahoms without any opposition.<sup>34</sup> The inhabitants of Koch Hajo,<sup>35</sup> also unable to oppose the Assamese, retreated and the entire Brahmaputra valley remained in possession of the Assam King, who even occupied part of the *parganā* Kuribari only five miles away from Dacca. The Mughal authority was thus wiped out on both banks of the Brahmaputra. The country then known as Kamrup bordered upon Assam,<sup>36</sup> as the word was used by the Mughals, and the two countries were on friendly terms. They used to raid imperial territories in the province of Bengal and carry off the *r'ayats* and Muhammadans as prisoners.<sup>37</sup> Great injury was thus done to life and property in Bengal. So Aurangzib ordered Mīr Jumla to crush the power of the Assam King. But before Mīr Jumla started for Kuch Bihar, he transferred the capital of Bengal from Rajmahal

<sup>32</sup> *Shihābuddin Tālīsh, Fathiyā-i 'ibriyā, B.M.A.M., No. 25, 422, fol 5b-6b.*

<sup>33</sup> *Māasir-i-Ālamgīrī, p. 39, 'Ālamgīrnamā, p. 676.*

<sup>34</sup> *Fathiyā-i-ibriyā, B.M.A.M. No. 25, 422. fol. 6a ; 'Ālamgīrnamā, p. 678.*

<sup>35</sup> Koch Hajo, a territory on the banks of the Brahmaputra river, to the east of Kuch Bihar, annexed by *Shāh Jahān*.

<sup>36</sup> The name Assam came to be applied to the eastern portion of the Assam valley which constituted the Ahom Kingdom. Kamarupa included the whole of the Assam valley.

<sup>37</sup> *Muntakhab, vol. II, p. 130.*

to Dacca. This he did to check the Arakanese and Portuguese pirates. He appointed Ihtishām Khān in charge of Dacca and Rai Bhagawati Das Shujai in charge of financial matters.<sup>38</sup> After that he set out from Khizrpur<sup>39</sup> with a well-equipped army towards Kuch Bihar. Meeting no opposition there, he struck coins in the name of Aurangzīb, and changed the name of the city to 'Ālamgīrnagar.<sup>40</sup> Isfāndiyār Beg was left to officiate as *faujdār* of Kuch Bihar and Qāzī Samu to act as *dīwān* there.<sup>41</sup>

On 4th January, 1662, Mīr Jumla left Kuch Bihar, proceeded along the banks of the Brahmaputra and passed through Rangamati with his military and naval forces. Dilair Khān was appointed leader of the vanguard (*harawal*) and Mīr Murtazā, the *daroga* of the artillery.<sup>42</sup> On 20th January 1662, the royal army took possession of Fort Jogikhapa, which belonged to Kamrup.<sup>43</sup> Ataullāh was left there to be *faujdār* of that place.<sup>44</sup> Capturing in quick succession the forts of Sirighat, Gauhati, Solagadha, Lakhokadh, Diwalgaon and Kajpur, Mīr Jumla marched into Garhgaon, the capital of Assam.<sup>45</sup> As the rainy season was approaching Mīr Jumla had to station in the vicinity of the river in order to get his troops across it before the rains. But early in May there were severe rains and Mīr Jumla was

<sup>38</sup> *Fathiyā-i-ibriyā*, fol. 8b.

<sup>39</sup> It has been identified to be a place close to Narayanganj in Dacca.

<sup>40</sup> *Fathiyā-i-ibriyā*, fol. 12b., 'Ālamgīrnāmā, p. 694., *Māastri-Ālamgīrī*, p. 40.

<sup>41</sup> *Fathiyā-i-ibriyā*, fol. 12b., 'Ālamgīrnāmā, y. 694.

<sup>42</sup> *Fathiyā-i-ibriyā*, fol. 13a.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 14b.

<sup>44</sup> 'Ālamgīrnāmā, p. 696.

<sup>45</sup> *Fathiyā-i-ibriyā* fol. 16b, 'Ālamgīrnāmā, p. 700.

cut off from his fleet and base of supplies.<sup>46</sup> Now the Assam King had a great opportunity, and he attacked from Namrup, the eastern most province of his kingdom.<sup>47</sup> The Mughal outposts were withdrawn and no places other than Garhgaon and Mathurapur remained in the possession of the imperialists. Meanwhile, provisions were exhausted and a terrible epidemic of fever broke in Mathurapur. In the Mughal camp no suitable diet was available for the sick and all had to live on coarse rice.<sup>48</sup> There was no alternative but to wait patiently for the end of the rainy season. By the end of September the worst was over—large quantities of provisions were sent from Lakhau by land and water under escort, and reached Garhgaon on 24th and 31st October respectively. The Mughal cavalry regained strength and *Raja* Jayadhwaj and his nobles fled back to the hills of Namrup. Mir Jumla was, or pretended to be, averse to any other terms than the complete submission of the Assam King. But being attacked by a violent fever and being confronted with the demand to return to Bengal,<sup>49</sup> Mir Jumla at last listened to the solicitations of *Dilair Khān*, who asked him to withdraw his troops from Assam. He agreed to withdraw his troops on condition that the *Raja* would annually pay 20,000 tolas of gold, 120,000 tolas of silver and twenty elephants, besides fifteen elephants for Mir

<sup>46</sup> *Zāfarnamā*, B.M.A.M. No. 26234, fols. 72a-73b, *Fathiyā-i-ibriyā*, fol. 40b.

<sup>47</sup> *Ālamgīrnamā*, p. 808, *Māasir-i-Ālamgīrī*, p. 805.

<sup>48</sup> *Māasir-i-Ālamgīrī*, p. 43, *Ālamgīrnamā*, p. 805. See also Jagadish Narayan Sarkar's *Mir Jumla's, invasion of Assam*, a contemporary Dutch Chronicle. It is an account of a Dutch sailor, who was shipwrecked on an island of Sandwip in 1661 and entered into the service of Mir Jumla. *Bengal Past and Present*, vol. 29, pp. 7-29.

<sup>49</sup> *Māasir-i-Ālamgīrī*, p. 44, *Muntakhab*, vol. II, p. 169.

Jumla and five for Dīlair Khān, further he was to arrange for his daughter to be married to one of the princes and send within the next twelve months three lakhs of tolas of silver and ninety elephants to the emperor in four monthly instalments.<sup>50</sup> Finally, Mīr Jumla demanded that *Sarkār* Darang in the Uttarkul and *Sarkār* Biltali and *Sarkār* Domariah in the Dakhinkul be ceded to the emperor. The boundary line between Assam and the Mughal dominion in the Dakhinkul would thus be the river Kalang, while in the Uttarkul it would be Alibarari.<sup>51</sup> The *Raja*, having accepted these terms, sent an envoy to the Mughal camp. He presented to Mīr Jumla twenty-thousand tolas of gold, one lakh eight thousand tolas of silver, ten elephants and his daughter.<sup>52</sup>

On 10th January, 1663, after falling victim to fever, Mīr Jumla set out in his *palki* to return. On 11th February, he marched out of Kajali and arrived at Pandu opposite Gauhati. He sent Rashīd Khān as *faujdār* of Kamrup. Mīr Jumla then started for Khizrpur, but he died on his way, on 31st March 1663.<sup>53</sup>

Meanwhile, Kuch Bihar had been recovered by its *Raja* while Mīr Jumla was isolated at Garhgaon.<sup>54</sup> Isfandiyār Beg was in charge of Kuch Bihar. But his and his officers' oppressions were unbearable to the inhabitants of that province. Consequently, they rose in a body and solicited their expelled *Raja* Bhim Narayan to resume the reins of government.<sup>55</sup> As soon as the *Raja* found himself sufficiently strong he sent a polite message to Isfandiyār Beg and Muḥammad Saleh, the

<sup>50</sup> *Ālamgīrnamā*, p. 808, *Muntakhab*, vol. II, p. 169.

<sup>51</sup> *Ālamgīrnamā*, p. 808. *Fathiyā-i-ibriyā*, fol. 28b

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 809, *Māasī-i-Ālamgīrī*, p. 44.

<sup>53</sup> *Māasīr-i-Ālamgīrī*, p. 44, *Ālamgīrnamā*, p. 812.

<sup>54</sup> *Māasīr-i-Ālamgīrī*, p. 44.

<sup>55</sup> *Ālamgīrnamā*, p. 812.



commander of the troops, telling them that if they retired peacefully from his dominions, they would not be molested.<sup>56</sup> The Mughal officers ignored the threat. But the loss of men and officers forced them to go to Gauhati. Mīr Jumla's death came at an inopportune time and Mughal authority was lost over Kuch Bihar.

While Mīr Jumla was away campaigning in Assam, Bengal itself became politically unstable. Aurangzib's aims in Bengal were stability, prosperity and peace in the province, the removal of oppressive *zamindārs*, the pacification of the people, and the provision of a well-ordered artillery and flotilla. Further Aurangzib wanted to bring Assam, Kuch Bihar and Chittagong under his imperial sway in order that he might consolidate his authority firmly and successfully all over north eastern India. Although these aims were simple enough, their execution occasioned great disorder in the Bengal sūba. We have already said that the war of succession entailed heavy losses to the sūba ; the Assam campaign further exhausted the resources of Bengal and the power of the common people. Many naval officers and men perished in the campaign. Consequently, the flotilla was in utter ruin.<sup>57</sup> This unprotected condition of the Bengal seaboard increased the audacity of the Portugese, who were a constant menace in Bengal. It appears from the accounts of *Shihāb-ud-din Tālīsh* who accompanied Mīr Jumla in his Assam campaign, that the situation was desperate and that Bengal needed firm supervision and quick decisions.

The news of Mīr Jumla's death reached Aurangzib at Lahore on 23rd April. For some time *Ihtishām Khān*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> J. N. Sarkar, *History of Aurangzib*, vol. v. p. 365.

continued in charge of the general administration in Bengal, and Rai Bhagwati Das remained in control of its revenue officers.<sup>58</sup> When Ihtishām Khān, by the order of the emperor, proceeded to the court together with the family members of the deceased, Dilair Khān was commissioned to act as governor of Bengal until the arrival of Daud Khān from Bihar. The latter was to officiate as the governor pending the arrival of Shāista Khān, the permanent *nāzim*. The emperor was not satisfied with the behaviour of Shāista Khān, then viceroy of the Deccan. He was thus transferred from the viceroyalty of the Deccan to that of Bengal.<sup>59</sup> At the beginning of Aurangzib's reign Chittagong, the tract of country ruled by the *Raja* of Tripura, was the only territory in eastern Bengal still to be annexed to the Bengal sūba. The internal peace and good order of the sūba depended upon the control of Assam on the one hand and checking the Arakan pirates of Chittagong on the other. Chittagong was not annexed to Bengal during the first seven years of Aurangzib's predecessors. Chittagong was entered as one of the revenue defaulting *sarkārs* between Mughal Bengal and Arakan. Though Chittagong was not annexed under Akbar, it was assessed. The reason of its assessment may be assumed. Chittagong was bounded on the west by the Bay of Bengal and on the north and north west by the Feni river. Its position near the mouth of the river Meghna estuary encouraged seagoing vessels with its easy access and safe anchorage. So it was a great emporium in the sixteenth century. As early as 1552, De Barras writes that "Chatigam is the most famous and wealthy city of the Kingdom of Bengal by reason of its port, at which meets

<sup>58</sup> *Fathiyā-i-'ibriā*, fol. 104a.

<sup>59</sup> *Māasir-i-'Ālamgiri*, p.45.

the traffic of all that eastern region". Todar Mall assessed Chittagong on the assumption that one day it would be annexed to Bengal.

However, the Arakan pirates, both Magh and Firingi, used constantly to come by the water route and plunder Bengal and cause loss to the traders at the mouth of the Ganges. "Every kind of criminal from Goa or Ceylon, Cochin or Malacca, mostly Portuguese and half-caste, flocked to Chittagong where the King of Arakan designed to welcome any sort of allies against his formidable neighbour the Mughal and permitted them to settle. They soon developed a busy trade in piracy, scoured the neighbouring seas in high galleasses, entered the numerous arms and branches of the Ganges, ravaged the island of lower Bengal, and, often penetrating forty or fifty leagues up the country, surprised and carried away the entire population of villages, and married the poor gentiles, and other inhabitants of this quartar at their assemblies, their markets, their festivals and weddings, seizing slaves both men and women, small and great perpetrating strange, cruelties and burning all that they could not carry away".<sup>60</sup> The pirates usually came to Bengal from Chittagong. They passed Bhulua (present Noakhali district) on the right, the island of Sandwip, belonging to the *Zamindār* Dilwar on the left, and reached the village of Sangramgarh. Sangramgarh is situated at the extremity of the delta, which contains Dacca and other towns and villages.<sup>61</sup> Firingi pirates sold their prisoners but the Maghs employed all their captives in agriculture and other kinds of manual service.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup>Bernier, *Travels of the Mughal Empire*, pp. 175-82.

<sup>61</sup>J. N. Sarkar, 'Conquest of Chittagong,' *J.A.S. B.*, 1907. p. 421.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 422.

Therefore Aurangzib ordered Mir Jumla to punish the pirates of Chittagong. But Mir Jumla did not survive to execute the task and it consequently devolved upon *Shāista Khān*, his successor in Bengal.

On the 8th March, 1664, *Shāista Khān* entered Rajmahal and announced his design to conquer Kuch Bihar on his way to Dacca. This news made the *Raja* of Kuch Bihar submit. The *Raja's* offer of five and a half lakhs of rupees as reparation was accepted. The Mughal army was ordered to withdraw from the Koch frontier as soon as two instalments of this were paid.<sup>63</sup> The problem of Kuch Bihar was thus settled. The new *subadār* now turned his attention to Arakan.

*Shāista Khān* ordered the boat makers at the ports of Hugli, Balasore, Murang, Chilmari, Jessore and Kuribari to build as many boats as possible. He also asked both the Dutch and the English East India Company to co-operate with him against the *Raja* of Arakan, who supported the Maghs.<sup>64</sup> But the English strong in their resolve to abstain from all interference in politics of India, and particularly in warfare of any kind, refused. Consequently *Shāista Khān* endeavoured to enlist the support of the Dutch, and sent ambassadors to Batavia asking them to join in exterminating the pirates, and subduing the *Raja* of Arakan. The Director of the Dutch Company, who was anxious to crush the Portuguese power, readily consented and despatched two battleships to join the Mughal fleet in the Bay.

Thus preparations for war against Arakan were made. *Shāista Khān* on his way from Rajmahal to Dacca met at every port the chiefs of the Dutch East India Company

<sup>63</sup>Ed. J. N. Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, vol. II, p. 376.

<sup>64</sup>J. N. Sarkar, "Conquest of Chittagong", *J.A.S.B.* 1907 p. 406.

and ordered them all to write to the Firingi pirates of Chittagong to come over to the *nawāb's* service.<sup>65</sup> It was an imposing expedition that *Shāista Khān* fitted out at Dacca. Of the army of forty-three thousand men, three thousand were placed on board the ships, and Husain Beg was sent ahead of the main army to clear the rivers of the pirates.<sup>66</sup> Buzurg Ummid *Khān*, *Shāista Khān's* son, was ordered to proceed by land and to drive the Maghs from the islands which they had occupied in the delta of the Ganges. Husain Beg led his fleet down the Meghna and sailed on towards the island of Sandwip, for long the headquarters of the Portugese adventurers, who had already fortified and strengthened it.<sup>67</sup> The Mughals captured Sandwip. Consequently the Firingis of Chittagong sided with the Mughals, who took them into imperial service. Captain Moor, the Firingi leader was rewarded by the *nawāb*. After a few days Captain Moor informed the *nawāb* of the sailing of the Arakan fleet towards Chittagong fort. He further asked the *nawāb* to attack Chittagong before the arrival of the enemy reinforcement.<sup>68</sup> *Shāista Khān* took this opportunity and crushed the Arakan pirates. On the 27th January 1666, Buzurg Ummid *Khān* entered the fort of Chittagong and assured the people that their lives were safe.

Beset by land and sea the Maghs gave up the struggle and made a vain effort to escape to their own country in the dead of night. But the Mughal cavalry pursued them and as many as two thousand Maghs were caught and sold as slaves. At the end of *Sh'aban* (February, 1666), the

<sup>65</sup>J. N. Sarkar, "Conquest of Chittagong", *J.A.S.B.*, 1907, p. 407.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 408.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 409. '*Ālamgīrnamā*. p. 944.

emperor ordered "Chatgaon" to be renamed "*Islamabād*".<sup>69</sup> Thus Chittagong was conquered by the Mughals and permanently annexed to Bengal. After the continual wars and inroads of the Maghs and Portugese, from which western Bengal had so long suffered, came a period of peace, an inestimable boon to the much harassed land and people. Thousands of Bengal peasants so long held there in servitude by the pirates were now released. The Magh prisoners who came from Chittagong with *Shāista Khān* settled down twelve miles south of Dacca. The place is still known as Firingi-bazar.<sup>70</sup> The Mughals advanced in Chittagong up to the port of Ramu, but soon gave it up as too distant an outpost.<sup>71</sup> However, *Shāista Khān*'s attempt to crush the Arakan pirates was successful. If they had not been subdued, Bengal might have passed into the hands of the Maghs.

At the end of 1666, the trouble with the Assamese on the frontier started again. Aurangzib sent presents to Jayadhwaja Singh, who died meanwhile, and the new king Chakradhwaja Singh declined to accept the presents. He complained that the prisoners taken during the late war had not been released and that, in the matter of the boundary, the Mughals had failed to keep their promise. On this complain, Aurangzib promised to give up any portion of the newly acquired territory that had not been previously included in the dominions of the Koch Kings. In spite of this, Chakradhawaja still withheld payment of the outstanding portion of the indemnity.<sup>72</sup>

*Raṣhid Khān*, the *faujdār* of Gauhati, again sent a messenger to ask for the money and elephants that were

<sup>69</sup> *Ālamgīrnamā*, p. 656.

<sup>70</sup> A. H. Dani, *Dacca*, p. 41.

<sup>71</sup> *Ālamgīrnamā*, p. 1070.

<sup>72</sup> *Ālamgīrnamā*, p. 1068, E. Gait, *A History of Assam*, p. 152.

still due. As the messenger was unwilling to make the customary obeisance on entering the royal presence, the Raja refused to receive him.<sup>73</sup> Early in 1667 Rashid Khān was succeeded by Sayyid Fīrūz Khān. Fīrūz Khān too sent a letter to the Raja, demanding the dues.<sup>74</sup> On receiving this letter Chakradhwaja decided to fight. A well-equipped army set out in August, 1667 and captured Gauhati.

The news of the loss of Gauhati reached Aurangzib in December 1667. Immediately Raja Ram Singh was appointed to the command of an imperial army,<sup>75</sup> which was to be strengthened by troops of the Bengal command. Raja Ram Singh was accompanied by Rashid Khān, the late *faujdār* of Gauhati.<sup>76</sup> The Ahoms asked Ram Singh why he was invading the country. He replied that in the old treaty Barnadi and Asurar Ali had been accepted as the boundary between the Mughals and the Ahoms. So he demanded the evacuation of the country to the west of this line. By this time the Ahoms had mobilised and made heavy incursions on the Mughals. The Mughals were defeated both on land and water.<sup>77</sup>

Meanwhile Chakradhwaja died and his brother Udayaditya succeeded him. Negotiations started with the Mughals. Raja Ram Singh agreed to the old treaty by which Barnadi and Asurar Ali would be the boundary of the Mughals. But as soon as Ram Singh received reinforcements he advanced to Sitamari and sent a garrison into Darrang.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>73</sup> E. Gait, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

<sup>74</sup> *Ālamgīrnamā*, p. 1068.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, *Māasir-i-Ālamgiri*, p. 65.

<sup>76</sup> *Ālamgīrnamā*, p. 1068.

<sup>77</sup> E. Gait, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

The Mughals were again defeated and retreated to Rangamati. Thus Kamrup was lost to the Mughals in 1671.

As *Shāista Khān* was recalled by the emperor in 1677, *Fidāi Khān*, the foster brother of Aurangzib, was appointed *nāzim* of Bengal.<sup>79</sup> *Fidāi Khān* arrived at Dacca in the year 1677, but died there early in the following year. He was described by the English agents as covetous and tyrannical.<sup>80</sup> In consequence of such behaviour an order had been issued from the court for him to quit Dacca and reside at Khizrpur. But it reached Dacca after his death.

Prince Muḥammed Ā'zam, third son of Aurangzib, the then governor of Bihar, was now ordered to take charge of Bengal.<sup>81</sup> He arrived at Dacca on 30th June 1778, and towards the end of that year detached an army to drive back the Ahoms. Upon the approach of the imperial forces the Ahoms retired and the Mughals recaptured Gauhati in March 1679. But three years later the Ahoms again recovered it. However, Prince Ā'zam's success was magnified at Court into a new conquest. He received a robe of honour, with a diamond necklace valued at two lakhs of rupees.<sup>82</sup> The prince, who loved hunting, left the administration of Bengal in the hands of his *dīwān* Muḥammad Hāshim and his deputy Rai Malickchand.<sup>83</sup> After the conquest of Gauhati, the

<sup>79</sup> *Māasir-i-Ālamgiri*, p. 159.

<sup>80</sup> Hugli Factory Records, vol. II, p. 55.

<sup>81</sup> *Māasir-i-Ālamgiri*, p. 168.

<sup>82</sup> *Māasir-i-Ālamgiri*, p. 173.

<sup>83</sup> Ed. J. N. Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, vol. II, p. 382. In Sarkar's quotation from "Annals of the Delhi Padshahate", English translation of one of the Assamese Buranjis, by S. K. Bhuyan, it is stated that Mir Maula and Malikchand were Prince's *dīwān* and *huzur nawis*, but the English Factory Records often refer to Muḥammad Hashim and Rai Malickchand as his *dīwān* and deputy.



Prince's vanity was flattered, and he resolved to subjugate the Arakan King. Preparations had started, when by royal order Prince Ā'zam was recalled to court.<sup>84</sup> *Shāista Khān* was reappointed to the *Nizamat* of Bengal.<sup>85</sup> He arrived at Dacca in the end of 1679.

*Shāista Khān*'s second term as *nāzim* of Bengal was disturbed by minor frictions with the *Raja* of Tripura, the *Raja* of Jaintia and the *zamindār* of Kuch Bihar. In October 1682 the *Raja* of Tripura, and again in November the *Raja* of Jaintia attacked and burnt the City of Sylhet, the Mughal frontier outpost. But *Shāista Khān*'s son *Irādat Khān* checked the further attack and punished them.<sup>86</sup> The *zamindār* of Kuch Bihar stopped paying annual tribute, which amounted to ten lakhs of rupees, in 1685. *Irādat Khān* was again sent to expel the *zamindar*, who fled to the Fort of Ekduar, then to Kuch Bihar fort and lastly to Assam fort (Tezpur). *Irādat Khān* reoccupied Kuch Bihar, which remained in Mughal possession till the end of Aurangzib's reign.<sup>87</sup> In 1686 the English traders in Bengal caused great trouble by making war on the Mughal empire. In the last year of *Shāista Khān*'s subadārship (1688) peace was concluded between the Mughal government and the English.<sup>88</sup>

*Shāista Khān* was succeeded for a few months by *Khān Jahān Bahādur*,<sup>89</sup> then in July 1689 the *nizamat* was bestowed on *Ibrāhim Khān*, son of *Ali Mardan Khān*, who had been in the service of *Shāh Jahān*.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>84</sup> See *Infra*, p. 37.

<sup>85</sup> *Māasir-i-Ālamgiri*, p. 181.

<sup>86</sup> Ed. J. N. Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 377.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> See *Infra*, chapter VI.

<sup>89</sup> *Muntakhab*, vol. II, p. 395.

<sup>90</sup> *Riyāḍ-al-Salāṭin*, p. 223.

Ibrāhim Khān was a weak old man without military abilities. His sole passion was to read Persian books. He desired to administer justice with strict impartiality and to encourage agriculture and commerce. So to the English traders he was "most famously a just and good Nabob."<sup>91</sup> It was at this time (1695-96) that the imperial authority in Bengal was rudely shaken by the rebellion of Sova Singh, a *zamindār* of *parganā* Chitua Barda in Midnapore district, with the aid of Rahim Khān an Afghan Chief of Orissa.<sup>92</sup>

Sova Singh marched out from Midnapore to Burdwan, where he met Krishnaram, the *zamindār* of the district. Krishnaram opposed him, but lost his life in the action. Krishnaram's son Jagat Ray fled alone to Dacca and informed the *nawāb* Ibrahim Khān of the rebellion.<sup>93</sup> The imprudent *nawāb* issued an order to Nurullāh Khān, the *faujdār* of Chakla Jessore, Hugli, Burdwan and Midnapore, to put the rebel under restraint. Nurullāh Khān, who was also a merchant with much property and had no experience of war, set out for Hugli. But disheartened by the accounts of the rebel's strength he dared not proceed further. Shutting himself up in the fort, he applied to the captain of the Dutch East India Company at Chinsura for help.<sup>94</sup> The rebels blockaded the fort and Nurullāh departed with a few of his dependents, leaving all his possessions behind him. When the fort of Hugli thus fell into the hands of the rebels, the inhabitants of the district were seized with terror and many of them took shelter in Chinsura.<sup>95</sup> The Dutch with their two

<sup>91</sup> Hugly Factory Records, vol. III, p. 25.

<sup>92</sup> *Ġwārikh-i-Bangālā*, fol. 4.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 5.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 7.

ships anchored close under the walls of the fort of Hugli,<sup>96</sup> shattered the walls with their cannon and killed a considerable number of rebels. The insurgents fled to Satgaon. Sova Singh, giving the command of the army to Rahim *Khān*, retreated to Burdwan, but he was killed by the daughter of deceased Krishnaram Ray.<sup>97</sup> Himmat Singh, his brother, succeeded him and continued plundering the province. Rahim *Khān*, who assumed the title of *Shāh*, extended his conquests and subdued the whole of West Bengal from Midnapore to Rajmahal.<sup>98</sup> With the help of desperate adventurers and vagabonds who daily joined the insurgents, Rahim *Shāh* crossed the river and harried central Bengal, including Murshidabad. In Murshidabad, Niāmat *Khān*, a *jagīrdār*, opposed the rebels, but he too was killed in action.<sup>99</sup>

The news of Niamat *Khān*'s failure was conveyed by the *zamindārs* to the *nawāb* Ibrahim *Khān*. The *nawāb*'s capacity to rule was an important factor in determining the fate of the government. Both Salimallāh and *Ghulām Husain Salim* state that the *nawāb* was no soldier, but was weak and afraid to oppose such a powerful insurgent. Therefore, the *nawāb* had to write to the emperor for help.<sup>100</sup>

Through the imperial intelligence, the news had reached the emperor before he received Ibrāhim *Khān*'s letter. Aurangzib immediately conferred the command of the army in Bengal upon the son of Ibrāhim *Khān*, Zabardast

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Riyāḍ-al-Salāṭīn*. p. 226.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 8.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 10-11 ; *Riyāḍ-al-Salāṭīn*, p. 295.

*Khān*, an experienced and a valiant officer.<sup>101</sup> The rebellion assumed so threatening an aspect that the emperor also appointed his own grandson, 'Azim-ush-*Shān*, to the government of Bengal and Bihar.<sup>102</sup>

'Azim-ush-*Shān*, who was in the Deccan at that time, immediately proceeded towards Bihar through Oudh and Allahabad. He ordered the governor of Oudh to join him with his troops. Zabardast *Khān* lost no time, and started from Dacca with the royal train of artillery and his choicest troops to the bank of the Ganges.<sup>103</sup> He arranged his artillery in such a manner on both sides of the river that Rahim *Shāh* with his troops fell into severest straits. Rahim *Shāh* fled and took the route to Murshidabad.<sup>104</sup> The imperialists followed and chased him.<sup>105</sup> Meanwhile 'Azim-ush-*Shān* heard the news of Zabardast *Khān*'s success. He immediately left Bihar and advanced towards Burdwan through Rajmahal.<sup>106</sup> Out of jealousy he ignored Zabardast *Khān*, who left for Delhi in dismay. As soon as Zabardast *Khān* left Bengal, Rahim *Shāh* again started plundering Nadia and Hugli districts and arrived near Burdwan.<sup>107</sup> 'Azim-ush-*Shān* tried to pacify him by negotiations. The Afghan chief, who pretended to be desirous to negotiate, invited 'Azim's minister and slew him in his camp.<sup>108</sup> At this the prince 'Azim sent his army against the rebels, who were defeated near Chandrokona and whose leader was beheaded.<sup>109</sup> It was a notable victory for 'Azim-ush-*Shān* and his army gained considerable booty. The prince restored lands to those who had fled during the disturbances and conferred

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*    <sup>102</sup> *Māasir-i-'Ālamgīrī*, p. 387.

<sup>103</sup> *Riyāḍ-al-Salāṭīn*, p. 229.    <sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 232.    <sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 232.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 234.    <sup>107</sup> *Ibid.* p. 235.    <sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *Tawārikh-i-Bangālā*, fol. 210.

*zamindāris* upon the heirs of those who had sacrificed their lives for the royal cause.<sup>110</sup>

Sova Singh's revolt and his success created a supreme necessity for the European traders to organise their own defence in Bengal. The English, the French and the Dutch now emphasized the importance of fortifying Calcutta, Chandernagore and Chinsura respectively, the headquarters of the three trading communities in eastern India. The Mughals too welcomed the establishment of fortified commercial settlements and permitted the building of Fort William in Calcutta, Fort Orleans at Chandernagore and Fort Gustavus in Chinsura.<sup>111</sup> Thus the rebellion of Sova Singh was an event of more than passing interest.

The *Nawāb* 'Azīm-ush-Shān fixed his residence at Burdwan. He was more interested in private trade, which he called *Saudā-i-Khāṣ*,<sup>112</sup> than in administering the government efficiently. *Saudā-i-Khāṣ* implied forcibly purchasing goods cheaply and then selling them in the market at fancy prices. 'Azīm-ush-Shān was sharply rebuked by the emperor.<sup>113</sup> In the meantime, Kārṭalab Khān was appointed as *dīwān* of Bengal and *faujdār* of Makhṣūṣābād in 1700 A.D.<sup>114</sup> In the following year he became *dīwān* of Orissa and *faujdār* of Midnapore and Orissa. He was also appointed as *dīwān* of Prince 'Azīm's *jāgir*.<sup>115</sup> According to Salimallāh, Kārṭalab Khān's expedient management in revenue affairs soon raised Bengal to the highest degree of prosperity.<sup>116</sup> As a rule, the finance department was under the *dīwān*'s jurisdiction,<sup>117</sup> and

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 226., *Riyāḍ-al-Salāṭīn*, p. 241.

<sup>111</sup> C. R. Wilson, *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, vol. I. p. 147.

<sup>112</sup> *Riyāḍ-al-Salāṭīn*, p. 243. <sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.

<sup>114</sup> Ed. J. N. Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 399. <sup>115</sup> *Māasir-i-'Ālamgiri*, p. 483.

<sup>116</sup> *Tawārikh-i-Bangālā*, fol. 26. <sup>117</sup> *Riyāḍ-al-Salāṭīn*, p. 244.

therefore the *nāzim* had no power on it. But Prince 'Azim-ush-Shān's sole aim was to amass money and he laid his hands on the state revenue. Kārṭalab Khān refused to let the *nāzim* interfere with imperial revenue matters. So dissensions broke out between the *dīwān* and the *nāzim*. The Prince intrigued with some troopers to mutiny and murder the *dīwān*. But the conspiracy failed through Kārṭalab Khān's courage and tact. He removed the revenue office from Dacca to Makḥṣuṣābād and renamed the city Murshidabad.<sup>118</sup> Meanwhile, Askar Khān, who was the *sūbadār* of Orissa, died at the end of 1702. The emperor appointed 'Azim-ush-Shān for that post, but when he received a detailed report of the events in Bengal from Kārṭalab Khān he cancelled Prince 'Azim's appointment. Aurangzib asked Kārṭalab Khān, who was, in the meantime, give the title Murshid Quli Khān, to take charge of the executive administration of *sūba* Orissa.<sup>119</sup> Murshid Quli thus became deputy *sūbadār* of Orissa in January 1703. He soon became *sūbadār* there.<sup>120</sup> At the same time Aurangzib ordered Prince 'Azim to move to Bihar, which had previously been added to his charge.<sup>121</sup> Under the order of the emperor he transferred the capital in 1703 to Rajmahal and then to Patna, which he was permitted by the emperor to name 'Azimabad after his own name. Farrukh Siyar, Prince 'Azim's son, lived at Dacca as the deputy of his father. In January 1704, Murshid Quli was appointed the *dīwān* of Bihar in addition to all his other posts,<sup>122</sup> thus holding an important position in the three *sūbas* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Murshid Quli enjoyed supreme influence with the imperial government till the last days of Aurangzib.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 252, *Tawārikh-i-Bangālā*, fol. 30b.

<sup>119</sup> Ed. J. N. Sarkar, *op. cit.* p. 404.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.* <sup>121</sup> *Ibid.* <sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

### CHAPTER III

## STRUCTURE OF MUGHAL ADMINISTRATION IN BENGAL AND ITS WORKING

The provincial administrative structure of the Mughal empire in the time of Aurangzib was similar to that of Akbar's days. The administration was divided into two parts, the executive and the revenue—the former looked after by the *Nāzim* in the *Sūba*, the *Faujdār* in the *Sarkār* and the *Shiqdār* in the *Parganā*. The executive and the revenue departments were kept independent of each other. The *Nāzim* and the *Diwān* were both guided in the affairs of administration by rules and regulations laid down in the *Dastūr-al-‘amal* (code of procedure) periodically issued under the emperor's order.<sup>1</sup>

The *Nāzim* was appointed by an imperial order.<sup>2</sup> As head of the province, the *Nāzim* had the ultimate responsibility for the enforcement of the imperial regulations.<sup>3</sup> He was further authorised to punish any officer who acted contrary to imperial orders. In 1660 Mir Jumla found Mulla Mustāfa, the Qāzī of Dacca, corrupt, and the Mir ‘Adil<sup>4</sup> a parasite. Though a provincial Qāzī was to be appointed by the imperial Qāzī and should normally be recalled by him, Mir Jumla dismissed them

<sup>1</sup> *Riyād-al-Salāṭīn*, pp. 247-48.

<sup>2</sup> *Ā’in-i-Akbarī*, (Jarrett), II, p. 194.

<sup>3</sup> *Riyād-al-Salāṭīn*, p. 245.

<sup>4</sup> According to P. Saran, the post of Mir ‘adil was created by the Mughals. He refers to Abūl Fazl who says that “it was only conditional on the Qāzi being found unable to manage the whole work, and not a regular appointment”—P. Saran, p. 347.

both.<sup>5</sup> He himself looked after both the religious and secular affairs of the city.

Though there is no evidence to show that the usual term of service of a *nāzim* in a province was fixed, Tavernier refers to a custom of the empire according to which a *nāzim* was expected to retire from a province after three years.<sup>6</sup> But the retirement of the *nāzim* also depended on the emperor's discretion. For instance, *Shāista Khān* held his *sūbadārship* for twenty years, though not in one period. He came to Bengal twice. The emperor could recall any *nāzim* for his own personal service. He called Muḥammad Ā'zam, his third son, from Bengal in 1679 to join him in the war against the Rajputs in Ajmer.<sup>7</sup> Similarly the emperor recalled *Safshikān Khān* from Orissa to attend him as *daroga* of the *Top Khāna* in his advance against the Pathans.<sup>8</sup> In case of incompetence a *nāzim* was liable to be recalled. The *Nawāb Fidāi Khān*, because of his vindictive attitude towards the imperial *dīwān*, was dismissed from Bengal in 1678.<sup>9</sup> Aurangzib recalled *Bahādur Khān* in 1689, because of his oppressive attitude.<sup>10</sup> The *Nawāb Ibrāhim Khān* was found weak and unfit to control the affairs of Bengal and similarly he was discharged in 1696 and was replaced by 'Azim-ush-Shān.<sup>11</sup> When 'Azim-ush-Shān, the grandson of Aurangzib, was found to be interested in the private trade, he was asked by the emperor to live in Bihar.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, *Life of Mir Jumla*, p. 211.

<sup>6</sup> Tavernier's "*Travels in India*" vol. II, p. 63.

<sup>7</sup> J. N. Sarkar, "*Studies in Aurangzib's Reign*", p. 62.

<sup>8</sup> *Māasir-i-Ālamgiri*, p. 133.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>10</sup> *Muntakhab*, vol. II, p. 416.

<sup>11</sup> *Māasir-i-Ālamgiri*, p. 387.

<sup>12</sup> *Riyāḍ-al-Salāṭīn*, p. 250.



The *naib nāzim* or deputy of the *nāzim* was also an important executive officer. There were two deputies, one in Orissa and one in Dacca. We have mentioned previously that Orissa was detached from Bengal in Jahāngir's time,<sup>13</sup> but even after this the administrative control of the province was occasionally entrusted to the *nāzims* of the adjoining provinces. In such cases the *nāzim* as a rule administered the province through a deputy appointed by himself with the approval of the emperor.<sup>14</sup> During our period, when Mir Jumla was appointed *nāzim* of Bengal, he sent Ihtishām Khān to take charge of the governorless province of Orissa.<sup>15</sup> Although Shāista Khān was already *nāzim* of Bengal, he was appointed *nāzim* of Orissa in 1676.<sup>16</sup> But he sent his deputy there to administer the province.<sup>17</sup> During the sūbadārship of Prince Ā'zam in 1678 in Bengal, Orissa was governed by his deputy Nurullāh Khān.<sup>18</sup> In the absence of the *nāzim*, his deputy (*naib nāzim*) could carry on the administration. When Mir Jumla set out for the Assam Campaign in 1661 he appointed Ihtishām Khān, who had in the meanwhile come back from Orissa, in charge of Dacca and Rai Bhagawati Das shujai in charge of financial and internal affairs.<sup>19</sup> Even in the presence of the *nāzim* in Dacca, there was one deputy who is often referred to by the English Factory Records. From the English correspondence it appears that the main duty of the *nāzim's* deputy was to act according to the *nāzim's* order.

<sup>13</sup> See *Supra*, Chapter I.

<sup>14</sup> P. Saran, "*The Provincial Government of the Mughals*", p. 72.

<sup>15</sup> J. N. Sarkar, "*Studies in Mughal India*", p. 204.

<sup>16</sup> *Māasir-i-Ālamgiri*, p. 150.

<sup>17</sup> There is a reference to one of Shāista Khān's sons, who was deputy Sūbadār of Orissa, in "*History of Bengal*", vol II, p. 375. But there is no mention of any date.

<sup>18</sup> *Māasir-i-Ālamgiri*, p. 169.

<sup>19</sup> *Riyāḍ-al-Salāṭin*, p. 220.

A *nāzim* could appoint an agent of his own choice with the approval of the emperor to administer the province in his name, while he himself remained away either for personal reasons or by the order of the emperor. Thus, when Aurangzib ordered 'Azim-ush-Shān to live in Bihar, he appointed Farrukh Siyar, a *naib nāzim*, to carry on the administration of Bengal from Dacca.<sup>20</sup>

If the *nāzim* of Bengal died, the *nāzim* of Bihar was to take charge. When Mir Jumla died in 1663 Daud Khān, the *nāzim* of Bihar, officiated as the *nāzim* of Bengal until the arrival of the permanent *nāzim* Shāista Khān.<sup>21</sup> Similarly when Fidāi Khān died, Prince Ā'zam, the *nāzim* of Bihar<sup>22</sup> was appointed *nāzim* of Bengal.<sup>23</sup>

Besides the *nāzim*, in charge of the executive administration of a province, there were the *Ṣadr* (head of the religious department, charity and grant), the *Qādī* (Judge), the *Bakhshī* (paymaster), the *Kotwāl* (superintendent of police), the *Mīrbahār* (admiral), and *Waqi'anawīs*, (the news reporter).

For the convenience of administration each province was divided into *sarkārs* and *sarkārs* into *parganās*. Each *sarkār* had its executive head known as *faujdār*, who represented the executive half of the government. The *faujdārs* were in fact the assistants of the *nāzim*. P. Saran refers to a *farmān* of Aurangzib, which confirmed the appointment of Mujāhid Khān in the post of *faujdār* of *Sarkār* Khairabād in Oudh and mentioned his duties.<sup>24</sup> According to it his duties were to keep order, enforce payment of government dues and suppress rebels and

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 250.

<sup>21</sup> *Fathiyā-i-'ibriyā*, fol. 172.

<sup>22</sup> *Māasir-i-'Ālamgīrī*, p. 157.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>24</sup> P. Saran, "Two farmāns of Aurangzib". *Islamic Culture*, 1945, pp. 261-269.

robbers. In fact, a *faujdār* was responsible for maintaining law and order of a *sarkār*. For this purpose a contingent was placed under his command. The *faujdār* was particularly enjoined not to dispossess anyone from his rightful property. He was required to send monthly reports to the *nāẓim* about every occurrence of a *sarkār*.

There was no strict rule that each *sarkār* must have a *faujdār*. During Aurangzib's reign Bengal was divided into 34 *sarkārs* but for the purpose of maintaining executive administration it was divided into twelve *faujdārī* areas :

(1) Islamabad ; (2) Srihatta ; (3) Rangpur ; (4) Rangamati ; (5) Jalalgarh (Purnia) ; (6) Akbarnagar (Rajmahal) ; (7) Rajshahi ; (8) Burdwan ; (9) Balasore ; (10) Hugli ; (11) Murshidabad ; (12) Hijli.

From 1647 to 1667 Malik Beg was in charge of Hugli,<sup>25</sup> but not continuously, for in 1664 one Muḥammad Sharīf, who was deputed to fortify Sangramgarh before the conquest of Chittagong, was described as late *faujdār* of Hugli.<sup>26</sup> Malik Qāsim, the son of Malik Beg, was twice the *faujdār* of Hugli, in 1668-72 and again in 1672-81.<sup>27</sup> In 1673 the *faujdār* was one Mīrza Saiyid Jalāl.<sup>28</sup> At the end of 1676 Malik Qāsim's son Malik Zīndi became *faujdār* of Hugli.<sup>29</sup> Both Malik Qāsim and Malik Zīndi are referred to unfavourably in the English Factory Records as having interfered with the trade and exacted money from them. Malik Qāsim was succeeded by Safīd Maḥmūd,<sup>30</sup> who was again replaced by Malik

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Bowrey "Countries Round the Bay of Bengal", p. 183, foot note I.

<sup>26</sup> J. N. Sarkar, *J. A. S. B.* 1907, p. 42.

<sup>27</sup> T. Bowrey, *op. cit.* p. 183, foot note II.

<sup>28</sup> *H. F. R.*, vol. I, p. 23.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 329.

<sup>30</sup> *The Diary of William Hedges*, vol. I, p. 146.

Barkhwārdā.<sup>31</sup> During the war in 1686, between the Mughals and the English, Abdul Ghāni was the *faujdār* of Hugli.<sup>32</sup> In 1690 Mīr Ali Akbar was appointed as the *faujdār* of Hugli.<sup>33</sup> In 1668, Maḥmud Yusūf was the *faujdār* of Balasore.<sup>34</sup> In 1672 Puran Mal came in his place but he was transferred to Dacca in 1673.<sup>35</sup> In the same year *faujdār* Malik Qāsim came from Bengal to Balasore.<sup>36</sup> We find *faujdār* Aziz Beg in 1675 there.<sup>37</sup> He was again replaced by malik Qāsim.<sup>38</sup> Muḥammad Rezā was *faujdār* of Makhṣūṣābād (Murshidabad) in 1673 and was succeeded by Muḥammad Mūrād in 1676. In 1678 the *nawāb* Fīdāi Khān sent Lāl Beg, *faujdār* of Kasimbazar, to replace Muḥammad Mūrād, the *faujdār* of Makhṣūṣābād. Muḥammad Mūrād was unwilling to quit : the two *faujdar*s intrigued one against the other and Muḥammad Mūrād was ousted from his post for the time being. Meanwhile, Fīdāi Khān died and Mūrād received orders from the imperial *ḍiwān* Hājī Safī Khān, conferring on him the *faujdār* of Makhṣūṣābād.<sup>39</sup> But he was soon replaced by Mīr Riyād.<sup>40</sup> We find in 1700 that Kār Ṭalab Khān was *faujdār* of Makhṣūṣābād.<sup>41</sup> Kasimbazar had also a local *faujdār* who was subordinate to the *faujdār* at Makhṣūṣābād. Similarly Malda had a local *faujdār*. Sometimes, the *faujdār* of Rajmahal

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>33</sup> *D. F. R.*, vol. I, part II, p. 12.

<sup>34</sup> *H. F. R.*, vol. IV, p. 75.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>39</sup> *K. F. R.*, vol. III, pp. 6, 10.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 67.

<sup>41</sup> *History of Bengal*, vol. II, p. 399.

took charge of *faujdārī* jurisdiction of Malda. We find in 1680 Zāman Beg<sup>42</sup> at Malda and in the next year Sibram Ray. In 1681 Rafi-uz-Zamān was joint *faujdār* of Malda and Rajmahal.<sup>43</sup>

Very little is known about the power and jurisdiction of the subordinate *faujdār*, but it appears from the *Mir'āt-i-Aḥmadī* that a subordinate *faujdār's* jurisdiction was limited to the particular town of a *sarkār* where he was appointed. He could sometimes keep cavalry on certain conditions.<sup>44</sup>

In 1691 Nurullāh Khān was joint *faujdār* of five places : Jessore, Hugli, Burdwan, Midnapore and Hijli.<sup>45</sup> Mirzanagar in Jessore was his headquarters. He was recalled for his failure to control the revolt of Sova Singh. He was replaced by Zabardast Khān, son of the *nawāb* Ibrāhim Khān.<sup>46</sup> In 1701 Kār Talb Khān was *faujdār* of Makhsūsābād, Burdwan and Midnapore.<sup>47</sup>

The *Sarkār* of Purnia was the most important Mughal outpost on the northern border of Bengal. It was in the charge of a *faujdār* who was only nominally subordinate to the *sūbadār*. The border *faujdār* had to keep watch over the frontiers and suppress the rebellious chiefs.<sup>48</sup> Towards the end of the seventeenth century Ostwal Khān was appointed *faujdār* of Purnia with the title of *nawāb*.<sup>49</sup> He was succeeded by Abdūllā Khān. About 1680 Isfāndiyār Khān became *nawāb* of Purnia and held the

<sup>42</sup> *M. F. R.*, vol. I. p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> *H. F. R.*, vol. X, pp. 10, 33.

<sup>44</sup> *Mir'āt-i-Aḥmadī*, (supplementary), 188 ff.

<sup>45</sup> *Riyād-al-Salāṭin*, p. 224.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

<sup>47</sup> *History of Bengal*, vol. II, p. 399.

<sup>48</sup> P. Saran, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

<sup>49</sup> *Nawāb* means literally a great deputy. It is used more loosely in an honorific sense.

office for twelve years. He was succeeded by Babhaniyār *Khān*, who ruled until his death in 1722.<sup>50</sup>

The *Sarkār* of Sylhet was another outpost on the north-east border of Bengal. Nawāb Jān Muḥammad was the *faujdār* of Sylhet in 1667. In 1670 Mahajasu *Khān*; in 1678 Saiyid Muḥammad Ali *Khān* Kamjang; in 1685 Nawāb Abdur Rahīm *Khān*; in 1686 Sadiq Bahadur; in 1698 Kārṭalab *Khān*; in 1699 Āḥmad Majid Bahādūr and in 1703, Nawāb Kargujar *Khān* Bahādūr became *faujdār* of Sylhet.<sup>51</sup>

A *faujdār* was theoretically subordinate to the imperial court but in fact he was responsible to the *nawāb*. The *nawāb* had the power to dismiss any *faujdār* if he was displeased with him. Consequently, a *faujdār* always tried to satisfy the *nawāb*. In 1672 the Dutch factory complained against Malik Qāsim, the *faujdār* of Hugli, to the *nawāb* Shāista *Khān*, that the *faujdār* had been extorting money from them.<sup>52</sup> Malik Qāsim thereupon was called to Dacca to answer the accusation. He reached Dacca and retained his post by offering presents to the *nawāb* and his officers amounting to Rs. 70,000.<sup>53</sup> But the English Factory Records further report that the Dutch had succeeded in securing Malik Qāsim's dismissal from the *faujdārship* of Hugli, at a cost of Rs.150,000 disbursed to the *nawāb* and other unnamed persons, presumably subordinates.<sup>54</sup> Malik Qāsim was transferred to Balasore and the new *faujdār*, Āziz Beg, came to Hugli.

<sup>50</sup>Bhabananda Sinha, *Purniar Itibritṭa*, p. 12.

<sup>51</sup>Achuyat Charan Chaudhuri, *Srihatter Itibritṭa*, vol. I, pp. 66-67.

<sup>52</sup>See *Infra*, Section III, Chap. V.

<sup>53</sup>*H. F. R.*, vol. IV pp. 6,8.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. VII. p. 81.

A new *nawāb* might not like the staff of the *faujdār* of his predecessor. Accordingly, he could re-constitute it. When Prince Ā'zam came to Bengal in 1678 his favourite Ali Nāki became *faujdār* of Hugli and Ali Nāki turned out Malik Qāsim's people.<sup>55</sup> Again, when *Shāista Khān* came for the second time in 1680, Ali Nāki was dismissed from his place by *Shāista Khān*'s representative, Muḥammad Hāssim.<sup>56</sup>

The *faujdār* was assisted in the work of administration in the *sarkār* by the *Kotwāl* and the *Qāzī*. The *sarkār* was both an administrative, including judicial and revenue unit. The *faujdār* was the executive head but had no judicial power. The *Kotwāl* and *Qāzī* divided between them the entire judicial work of the *sarkār*. Generally the supreme *Qāzī* of the empire appointed the provincial *Qāzī* who in his turn appointed the *qāzī* of the headquarters of a *sarkār*.<sup>57</sup> The main function of a *qāzī*'s office was to decide cases and to execute judgements.<sup>58</sup> In the reign of Aurangzib the *qāzī* of a *sarkār* was in charge of collecting the *Zakāt* and *Jizīya* taxes. He had a separate staff for this purpose.<sup>59</sup> It is difficult to ascertain the composition of the provincial courts. Jadunath Sarkar shows in his *Mughal Administration* that the provincial court was mainly composed of three officers: the *Ṣadr*; the *Qāzī*; and the *Mir'adl*.<sup>60</sup> But P. Saran asserts

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 36.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 48.

<sup>57</sup> J. N. Sarkar, *The Mughal Administration*, p. 27,

<sup>58</sup> P. Saran, *op. cit.*, pp. 340-41.

<sup>59</sup> *Mir'āt-i-Ahmadi*, vol. I, p. 296, *Muntakhab-u-Lubab*, vol. III, p. 606

<sup>60</sup> *Mir'adl* was an officer of Justice. M. B. Ahmad writes in his *Administration of Justice in Medieval India* (p. 160) that "Mir'adl possessed no judicial powers such as those of a Qāzī. His duties were analogous to those of a Mufti. The Mufti gave his opinion on a point of law and the Mir'adl submitted a

that "while the three offices of the *ṣadr*, the *qāzī* and *mīr'adl* are in some places separately mentioned, in actual practice these three offices seem to have been very often entrusted to one and the same person even though they may not have been amalgamated. Sir Jadunath himself, perchance unconsciously, recognises this fact when he mentions only the *qāzī* in the provincial judiciary (except the governor) and neither the *ṣadr* nor *mīr'adl*".<sup>61</sup> But we find that in 1660 Qāzī Rizvī was the *ṣadr* and Mullā Mustāfa the *qāzī* of Dacca and again in 1665 Mīr Sayyid Sādiq was the *ṣadr*.<sup>62</sup> Thus we have clear proof that the offices of the *ṣadr* and the *qāzī* could sometimes be entrusted to two different individuals. In case of *mīr'adl*, incidental references in the English Factory records when reporting to the Court of Directors make it clear that in Bengal "Mīr Adil is also head qazi...".<sup>63</sup> In the later period of Aurangzib's reign Muḥammad Sharaf was the provincial *Qāzī* of Bengal.<sup>64</sup>

There is no clear classification of cases which came under the authority of the district *qāzī*, but the medieval Bengali literature shows that the cases involving religious laws such as inheritance, marriage and divorce, and civil disputes went to the district *qāzī's* court.<sup>65</sup> Towards the end of March 1679 a dispute arose between the Dutch and the English over the sale of a piece of land belonging to the English company near Balasore. The English

report on fact and the case was made over to him by the *qāzī*, after the judgement was delivered for superintendence of proceedings in execution. He was in fact a sort of superior Clerk of the Court."

<sup>61</sup>P. Saran, *op. cit.*, p. 344.

<sup>62</sup>J. N. Sarkar, "Studies in Mughal India", p. 158.

<sup>63</sup>M.F.R., vol. I, part II, p. 29.

<sup>64</sup>Tawārikh-i-Bangālāh, fol. 67b.

<sup>65</sup>Mukundaram, *Chandimangal*, p. 312.



claimed that they had bought it from assignees of one Lucia, who had occupied the house on it for a number of years and had recently died. They based their claim on a written acknowledgement by Lucia that her occupation of the land was purely permissive and that she was not to transfer it without the English company's consent.

The English put up the case to Malik Qāsim who was the *faujdār* of Hugli as well as of Balasore. Malik Qāsim referred it to the local *qāzī* of Balasore. The English feared that the Dutch might bribe the *qāzī*, but the *qāzī* decided the case in favour of the English.<sup>66</sup> An appeal by the Dutch to the Muftī<sup>67</sup> at Cuttack was ineffectual and the *qāzī*'s decree was confirmed.<sup>68</sup> The English Records refer to another case. One Jān Muḥammad from Makhṣūṣābād complained to the *nawāb* of Dacca that some Englishmen at Makhṣūṣābād had killed his father's concubine, robbed her of jewels worth two thousand rupees and forced her son to turn Christian. The *nawāb* referred the case to the *qāzī* of Makhṣūṣābād. After enquiring into the matter the *qāzī* gave his report that it was a false complaint and he sent to Dacca a full account of the matter under his seal.<sup>69</sup>

The magisterial side of the *sūbadār*'s functions was held by the *kotwāl*, who was the chief magistrate for the whole of the *sūba*. Under the *kotwāl* there was a large body of cavalry and a considerable

<sup>66</sup> *H.F.R.*, vol. VII, pp. 42, 52, 58, 59.

<sup>67</sup> Anyone who was by common agreement ranked among the learned recognised to be an authority on religious law was called by the title of Muftī. The Muftī was called upon to give a *fatwā* that is to say a decree in accordance with the law, on all questions of social and religious life of the Muslims and non-Muslims, P. Saran, p. 346.

<sup>68</sup> *H.F.R.*, vol. VII, pp. 75, 85.

<sup>69</sup> *K.F.R.*, vol. I, pp. 8, 10, 15.

number of foot soldiers.<sup>70</sup> Towns were divided into wards and in each ward a horseman and twenty to thirty foot soldiers were stationed. The *Kotwāl* appointed a headman for each ward. He kept a journal and sent his daily report to the *Kotwāl*.<sup>71</sup> The *Kotwāl* arrested thieves and criminals. He was answerable for all the thefts and robberies committed within the town. He was expected to know everything about everybody.<sup>72</sup> In the *Kowtālī Chabutrās* (police stations) of Bengal it was the custom that whenever a man proved a loan or claim against another, or a man's stolen property was recovered, the clerks of the *chabutrā* in paying to the claimant his due, used to seize for the state one-fourth of it under the name of "fee for exertion." The *nawāb Shāista Khān* abolished this practice.<sup>73</sup> The *Katwāl* had to regulate the markets, to examine weights and to punish those who kept short weights.<sup>74</sup> In 1681 Āziz Beg was the chief *Kotwāl* of Dacca and was succeeded by Muḥammad Huṣain, custom superintendent of Hugli.<sup>75</sup>

A *sarkār* was divided into several *parganās* or groups of *mahals*. In the *parganās* one man was considered sufficient to perform both the civil and judicial duties, which were therefore amalgamated under one officer who was called the *shiqdār*. The *shiqdār* acted as a criminal magistrate but with limited powers. When Manrique and his party on their way to Ganda from Hugli were arrested by the men of a village on the suspicion of being *Feringi* pirates of Chittagong, they were brought to the

<sup>70</sup> *Mir'āt-i-Ahmadi* (supplement), p. 178.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 168.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169, *Nigārnāmā-i-munshi*, fol. 115b-116a.

<sup>73</sup> J. N. Sarkar, "*Studies in Aurangzīb's Reign*", p. 176.

<sup>74</sup> *Mir'āt-i-Ahmadi*, vol. I., p. 169.

<sup>75</sup> *D. F. R.*, vol. I, p. 5.

local *shiqdār*. But their case was not within his jurisdiction and he referred it to the *Kotwāl* of Midnapore.<sup>76</sup>

The executive head of the province was also assisted in the work of administration by the *bakhshī* or paymaster, who had a multiplicity of duties to perform. The provincial *bakhshī* was appointed from the imperial court.<sup>77</sup> The main functions of the *bakhshī*'s department included enlistment and the passing of paybills both of the *mansabdars* and their soldiers. In the detailed account of the *sūbas*, the *Ā'in-i-Akbarī* mentions a number of cavalry and infantry against each *sarkār* in Bengal.<sup>78</sup> In the number of cavalry Bengal with Orissa stood sixth in comparison with other provinces, but in infantry it stood first. The *bakhshī* in addition to his above-mentioned duties, reported what was worth reporting to the imperial court. In the office of the *nāzim*, *dīwān*, *faujdār* and *qāzī*, there were *bakhshī*'s assistants who gathered detailed information about the work of these officers.<sup>79</sup> The English factory records refer to a certain person named *Pandit*, who was chief *bakhshī* of Dacca in 1679.<sup>80</sup> With the office of the provincial *bakhshī* was generally combined also that of *waqī'anawīs* or political remembrancer.<sup>81</sup> In 1680 one Rajab Ali was acting as *bakhshī* as well as *waqī'anawīs* in Bengal.<sup>82</sup> In 1681 *Khudā Bakhsh Khān* was the chief *bakhshī*. He was first cousin to Aurangzib and married the daughter of the *nawāb Shāista Khān*.<sup>83</sup> When *dīwān* Hajī Safī *Khān* was removed from his post, *Khuda Bakhsh Khān*

<sup>76</sup> *Travels of Manrique*, vol. I, pp. 409, 424.

<sup>77</sup> *Mir'āt-i-Ahmadi* (supplementary), p. 174.

<sup>78</sup> *Ā'in-i-Akbarī*, Tr. Jarrett, vol. II.

<sup>79</sup> *Nigārnamā-i Munghī*, fol. 112b.

<sup>80</sup> *D. F. R.*, vol. I, p. 27

<sup>81</sup> *Bahārīstan-i-Ghaybi*, vol. I, pp. 377-78.

<sup>82</sup> *M. F. R.*, vol. I, Part II, p. 10.

<sup>83</sup> *The Diary of William Hedges*, vol. I, p. 47

temporally officiated in it. Muḥammad Sharif succeeded him in 1690.<sup>84</sup>

The *sawāniḥnigār* or secret reporter was a kind of check on the *bakhshi* and *waqī'anawīs*, who were sometimes suspected of producing false reports.<sup>85</sup> Once Aurangzib learnt from the *sawāniḥnigār's* report that in Bengal the *nawāb* Ibrāhim Khān in excess of pride sat on a couch when he held *darbar* and the *qāzī* and other officers of canon law sat on the floor. Aurangzib asked the prime minister to write to the *nawāb* that "if he is unable to sit on the ground by reason of any disease, he is excused till his restoration to health and he should urge his doctors to cure him soon. As the report writer (*sawāniḥnigār*) has risen to a high rank (*manṣab*) he is no longer fit to continue as report writer, let him be given a promotion in rank of 100 troopers. Write to Ibrāhim Khān to find for him a *faujdārī* ( militia command ) within the jurisdiction of his province so that the latter (report writer) too may know the taste of report writing against himself by (other writers)".<sup>86</sup>

The comptroller of customs was often referred to by the English as deputy governor. In every port there was a customs house and a deputy governor with assistants. Dacca was the head customs office, from which the boats of foreign merchants had to obtain passports. At the customs house all newly arrived vessels had to be registered.<sup>87</sup> Between 1678 and 1680 one Muḥammad Hashim was the customs superintendent of Hugli.<sup>88</sup> In 1679 Mīrzā Walī was in charge of the customs house of

<sup>84</sup>D. F. R., vol. I., p. 77.

<sup>85</sup>P. Saran, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

<sup>86</sup>J. N. Sarkar, *Anecdotes of Aurangzib*, p. 132.

<sup>87</sup>Travels of Manrique, vol. II., p. 135.

<sup>88</sup>H. F. R., vol. I., p. 4.

the Balasore.<sup>89</sup> Early in 1681 Malik Beg was in charge of the customs house in Hugli; later he was transferred to Dacca,<sup>90</sup> and he was succeeded by his father *Khwājā Ināyatullāh*. Rai Balchand, the *faujdār* of *Makhṣūṣābād* applied in 1682 to the *dīwān* Haji Safī *Khān* for the post of customs superintendent of Hugli. Haji Safī *Khān* subsequently displaced Ināyatullā *Khān*.<sup>91</sup> In 1690 Manohardas was chief customs superintendent of Dacca.<sup>92</sup>

To assist the executive department there were also the *dārogas* of mint, market and *dastak* department, etc. In fact, the officers who supervised any department were known as *dārogas*.

One thing to be noticed in the provincial administration of the Mughals is plural appointments. In 1676 *Shāista Khān* was *nāzim* of Bengal as well as of Orissa. In 1698 Prince Azim-Ush-Shān became *nāzim* of Bengal and Bihar as well and he was also appointed *faujdār* of Kuch Bihar.<sup>93</sup> We have seen earlier that Murshid Qulī *Khān*, between 1700 and 1704, became *dīwān* of Bengal, Orissa and Bihar, and *nāzim* of Orissa, as well as *faujdār* of *Makhṣūṣābād*, Burdwan and Midnapore. Responsible and important posts, it seems, were occasionally combined in a capable officer like Murshid Qulī *Khān*.

Generally, the high posts in the administration were occupied by Muslims, but contemporary evidence shows that the Mughal *sūbadār* also employed Hindus in fairly high posts in the administrative service. It has been said already that when Mir Jumla set out for an expedition to Kuch Bihar and Assam he appointed Rai Bhagabati Das

<sup>89</sup> *B. F. R.*, vol. I, p. 33.

<sup>90</sup> *H. F. R.*, vol. II, p. 24.

<sup>91</sup> *H. F. R.*, vol. III, p. 83.

<sup>92</sup> *D. F. R.*, vol. I, p. 88.

<sup>93</sup> *Māasir-i-Ā'lamgīrī*, p. 387.

as *dīwān* of crown lands and Bhagwan Das Shujai was put in charge of the financial affairs of the imperial government in Bengal.<sup>94</sup> Similarly, Rai Nandalal, a Hindu, was *Shāista Khān*'s personal *dīwān*.<sup>95</sup> Rai Balchand was appointed as *faujdār* of *Makhṣuṣābād* in *Shāista Khān*'s time. Later he was customs superintendent of the Hugli port. Rai Malikchand was the assistant of the Prince Āzam's *dīwān*.<sup>96</sup> Manohardas was chief customs superintendent of Dacca. Radhaballabh<sup>97</sup> and Jadu Ray<sup>98</sup> were the *dīwāns* of *faujdār* Malik Zindi in Hugli and *faujdār* Rama Beg in Malda respectively. Sibram Ray,<sup>99</sup> the *faujdār* of Malda, Puran Malla, the *faujdār* of Balasore, Panchanan Ray,<sup>100</sup> the *Karorī* of Gopalpur *parganā* in Malda, Hara Krishna, the *āmil* of Patna and Rambhadra<sup>101</sup> the *dīwān* of *faujdār* Nurullāh Khān in Jessore were among the many Hindus who occupied posts of considerable importance. The *qānūngos* of Bengal in the revenue department generally belonged to the *Kāyastha* caste. We shall see later that the *ṣadr qānūngos* of Bengal were Darpanarayan and Jaynarayan. Haranarayan was a *parganā qānūngo* of Betia Gopalpur *parganā* in Malda.<sup>102</sup> Bhupat Ray and Krishna Ray came to Bengal with the *dīwān* Murshid Quli Khān in 1703. The former was appointed as secretary of the treasury and the latter as *dīwān*'s personal secretary.<sup>103</sup> Though we do not have complete lists

<sup>94</sup> *Riyād-al-Salātīn*. p. 244.

<sup>95</sup> *H. F. R.*, vol. II, p. 66.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 20.

<sup>98</sup> *M. F. R.* vol. I, Part II, p. 29.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. I, Part III, p. 27.

<sup>101</sup> S. C. Mitra, *Jessore Khulnar Itihasa*, p. 453.

<sup>102</sup> *M. F. R.*, vol. I, p. 34.

<sup>103</sup> *Tawārikh-i-Bangālāh*, fol. 30b.

of *faujdārs*, customs superintendents, and 'āmils, amīns and *karorīs* of revenue departments, the impression one gets from occasional references in the contemporary records is that in the higher category of posts such as *faujdār* and comptroller of customs, the proportion of Hindus to Muslims was 20 and 33.

#### THE REVENUE DEPARTMENT AND ITS ORGANISATION

Assessment of land revenue and its collection was the main task of the revenue department. Under the Mughals lands were classified into three kinds : (1) *Khālsa* lands or crown lands directly administered by the revenue department of the provincial government or through the revenue farmers called *mustājirs*, (2) *jāgīrs* or assignments granted to officers for their maintenance, (3) *zamindār's* land, often formally conferred on them as their assignments. There were also rent free lands granted for various reasons such as maintenance of religious institutions or persons. Rent free land existed in *zamindār's* as well as officers' land. There were several other taxes, such as *māhzūl* or customs in exports and imports, *rāhdarī*, or inland *toll* collected at road side stations and *pāndarī*, i.e., tax on shops of craftsmen and retail merchants in towns, etc. These taxes were known as *sair* duties and were also to be collected by the revenue department. But in fact the *sair* duties were included in certain *sarkārs* in the *Khālsa* and in others in the *jāgīr* lands. The rules and regulations of revenue administration issued from the imperial court primarily applied to the *Khālsa* lands, but their provisions were also applied to the *jāgīr* lands.

The *dīwān* was the head of the revenue department. He was appointed directly from the imperial court. In the

40th year of Akbar's reign the provincial *dīwān* was brought into direct subordination to the central revenue department. He was thus responsible to the imperial *dīwān* from whom he received his orders. Though the *dīwān* was placed at the head of the finance department, we find in the *Ā'in-i-Akbarī* that chief 'Āmil or 'amalguzār, the revenue collector of a province bore the main burden of the revenue administration.<sup>104</sup> The *Ā'in-i-Akbarī* states that his duties included encouraging cultivation by giving loans to poor peasants and gathering information from the village headmen about the cultivated lands. The assessment of lands was done either by fixing a definite share of the crop, whatever the yield, to go to the state (*bātaī*) or by the estimation of ripened crops (*kānkūt*). The 'āmil had the power to allow the husbandmen to choose either of these assessments. After assessment, a copy of its abstract was sent to the central revenue department within fifteen days. The collection of revenue was either in cash or in kind. The 'āmil was enjoined to encourage direct payment of revenue by the cultivators to the state without any intermediary.<sup>105</sup> He was to keep a report of daily receipts and expenditure which he sent every month to the imperial court. As soon as two lakhs or *dams* (Rs. 50,000) were collected he had to send the total sum to the central treasury. In addition to these duties the chief 'āmil had to keep watch on the work of his subordinate officials and to punish insurgents in order to protect the peasantry.<sup>106</sup> But in course of time the 'āmil's position was affected by the activities of the *dīwān*.

By the time of Jahāngīr, the *dīwan* became more independent. Jahāngīr's order to Wāzīr Khān, whom he

<sup>104</sup> *Ā'in-i-Akbarī*, ( Jarrett ) II, pp. 43-46.

<sup>105</sup> *Ā'in-i-Akbarī*, ( Jarrett ) II, p. 46.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*



appointed as *dīwān* of Bengal, shows that the revenue settlement of provinces was already entrusted to the *dīwān*.<sup>107</sup> He was independent of the *nāzim*. The division of authority between the *dīwān* and the *nāzim* was complete by the time of Aurangzib. Aurangzib's *farmān* to Muḥammad Hāshim, the *dīwān* of Gujarat in 1668,<sup>108</sup> the *Nigārnāmāh-i-Munshi* of 1684 and one *dastūr-al 'āmal* of 1704, all clearly indicate the provincial *dīwān*'s duties. According to those records the *dīwān* would collect revenue from the *Khālsa mahals* and would keep the detailed accounts of the income and expenditure from it in his office.<sup>109</sup> He would encourage the growth of cultivation by giving every sort of help to the peasants. If any calamity befell the cultivation, the revenue would be reduced.<sup>110</sup> He was to keep an eye on the activities of all the local revenue officers so that they might not tyrannise over the cultivators by collecting more than the fixed amount. Supervision of lands assigned for charitable endowments and disbursing of salaries to officers of the provinces were also the duties of a provincial *dīwān*.<sup>111</sup> As the provincial *dīwān* corresponded directly with the imperial *dīwān*, he was independent of the *sūbadār*. The purpose of this administrative device was to maintain an effective check on the highest officials of the province and to ensure success in the provincial administration. But in fact the *nawāb* and the *dīwān* always kept a jealous watch over each other's activities and reported them to the centre. During Jahān-

<sup>107</sup> *Tuzuk-i-Jahāngirī*, (Rogers), vol. I, p. 22.

<sup>108</sup> Farman translated by J. N. Sarkar in "Studies in Mughal India."

<sup>109</sup> *Nigārnāmā-i Munshi*, B.M. O.M. No. 1735, foll. 346-38a, 169 ff., *Khulasātu-s siyāq*, B. M. A. M., No. 6588, foll. 72b-73b.

<sup>110</sup> J. N. Sarkar, "Studies in Mughal India", pp. 170-171.

<sup>111</sup> *Khulasātu-s siyāq*, fol. 73b.

gir's reign there was a prolonged conflict in Bengal between the *dīwān* Mukhlis Khān and the *nawāb* Qāsim Khān.<sup>112</sup> There were also frequent conflicts during the period under review between the *nawāb* and the *dīwān*. In 1678 Hajī Safī Khān was the *dīwān* of Bengal.<sup>113</sup> He and the *nawāb* Fidāi Khān were not on good terms. Consequently each complained against the other to the emperor. The emperor ordered the *nawāb* to leave Dacca and reside at Khizirpur, a few miles away from Dacca. Their relations became so strained that when Fidāi Khān died, his son left Bengal in fear of Hajī Safī Khān.<sup>114</sup> It is further reported in the Factory Records that Hajī Safī Khān's son too fled from Cuttack through fear of Fidāi Khān's son, Muḥammed Sālah, the new *sūbadār* of Orissa, as Fidāi Khān was "a great enemy" of Hajī Safī Khān.<sup>115</sup>

In financial matters the *dīwān* stood on a par with the *nawāb*. After the death of Fidāi Khān, Prince Āzam was appointed *nawāb* of Bengal on 24th May 1678 A. D. On the proposal of the Prince's own *dīwān* Hajī Muḥammad, the *nawāb* ordered a *nishān*<sup>116</sup> to be issued granting the English company the right of free trade. But the *dīwān* Hajī Safī Khān intervened, on the following plea : In *Shāistā Khān*'s time, on a petition sent by the Danes for liberty to trade in Bengal with the same privileges as the English, Aurangzib had ordered that both the English and the Danes should pay two-per-cent customs ; there upon the English company's business was stopped and the

<sup>112</sup>T. K. Raychaudhuri, *Bengal under Akbar and Jahāngīr*, p. 7.

<sup>113</sup>*Maāsir-i-Ālamgīrī*, p. 193.

<sup>114</sup>*H. F. R.* vol. VII, pp. 88, 90.

<sup>115</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>116</sup>It denoted an order issued by a prince holding an executive position such as Viceroy.

factors sent word to *Shāista Khān* that if customs were forced on them contrary to their privileges they would leave the country. *Shāista Khān* then reconsidered the matter and issued a *parwāna*<sup>117</sup> confirming their right to customs remission as before, subject to their obtaining the emperor's order; *Shāista Khān* also wrote to the emperor on their behalf, but received no answer before his departure. His successor *Fidāi Khān* again stopped the company's business on this account until his death, after which the English applied to *Shāista Khān*; after some enquiry he wrote afresh to the emperor.<sup>118</sup> In these circumstances the *dīwān* *Hajī Safī Khān* gave his opinion that it would be best to wait until emperor's answer came before the Prince gave the desired documents to the English. The Prince accordingly postponed giving a *nishān*.<sup>119</sup> It is thus clear that *Hajī Safī Khān* really acted as the emperor's representative. However, at the end of 1678 a new *dīwān* *Mīr Mughis Khān* reached at Dacca.<sup>120</sup> On 5th May, 1680 *Mīr Mughis Khān* was dismissed and *Hajī Safī Khān* reappointed.<sup>121</sup> He demanded 5 per cent mint duty from the non-Muslims. Both the Dutch and the English complained to the *nawāb Shāista Khān*, who expressed the view that there was no good ground for the new charge. The *dīwān*, on the other hand, replied that he would complain to the emperor for "taking the emperor's business from his hands".<sup>122</sup> *Shāista Khān*'s own *dīwān*, *Rai Nandalal*, who favoured the merchants, thereupon advised them to

<sup>117</sup> *Parwāna* was an order issued by an executive officer other than a prince.

<sup>118</sup> *H. F. R.*, vol. I, pp. 73-74.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> *Maāsir-i-Ālamgiri*, p. 171.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.

<sup>122</sup> *D. F. R.*, vol. I, pp. 41—42.

combine, suspend their business, and agitate against the new charge. This they did early in May. In July orders arrived from Aurangzib that favoured Hajī Safī Khān. Relations between the two officers became so strained that the *nawāb* refused to meet the *dīwān*.<sup>123</sup> At the same time, Hajī Safī Khān sent a letter to the emperor, stating that Shāista Khān had spent 1,32,000,00 lakhs of rupees in excess of his annual salary. The emperor ordered that the amount should be demanded from the *nawāb* as part of his regular contribution to the central government.<sup>124</sup> In 1682, in September, Hajī Safī Khān was succeeded by Sayyid Ahmad.<sup>125</sup> In 1691 Kifayat Khān was the *dīwān* of Bengal. The *dīwān* Ali Raza succeeded him in 1700. The real power of the *dīwān* was shown on the appointment of Murshid Quli Khān,<sup>126</sup> (then known as Kār Talab Khān) in 1701 as *dīwān* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.

The *dīwān* carried out his varied functions through a number of officials in the *sarkārs* and *parganās*. In the *sarkār* the ‘*āmil*’ or ‘*amalguzār*’, the *Karorī* and the *bitikchī* were the important functionaries. According to Aurangzib’s earlier *farmān* (1665) the ‘*āmils*’ were instructed to investigate the condition of the peasants in every village and to try to bring barren (*banjar*) land under cultivation.<sup>127</sup> The ‘*āmil*’ was asked to watch “the standing crops with great care and fidelity ; and after enquiring into the sown fields, they should carefully ascertain the loss according to the comparative state of the present and past produce (*hāst-o-būd*)”.<sup>128</sup>

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>124</sup> *Maāsir-i-Ālamgīrī*, p. 170.

<sup>125</sup> *D. F. R.*, vol. I, p. 69.

<sup>126</sup> *Riyāḍ-al-Salāṭīn*, p. 244.

<sup>127</sup> J. N. Sarkar, “*Studies in Mughal India*”. p. 191.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194

The post of *Karorī* was created by Akbar. In 1596 A.D. the whole of the imperial territories, except Bengal, Bihar and Gujarat were converted into *Khālsa* or reserved lands.<sup>129</sup> The whole lands were then divided into districts and each district was expected to yield an average revenue of a *karor* of *tankās* per year. Those ‘*āmil*s who were placed in charge of these districts came to be known as *Karorī*.<sup>130</sup> Though this arrangement was subsequently discontinued, the title *Karorī* continued and it came to be applied to the collector of revenue. The fifth clause of Aurangzib’s first *farmān* describes the revenue collector as *karorī*, while the eleventh clause refers to him as ‘*āmil*’; thus it appears that these two terms were sometimes used synonymously.<sup>131</sup>

The *bitīkchī* of a *sarkār* did the entire work of preparing the necessary papers and records on the basis of which assessment and collection was carried out by the ‘*āmil*. In preparing the records the *bitīkchī* was assisted by the *Kārkūn* and the *amīn*.<sup>132</sup> The *kārkūn* or *parganā* accountant kept a full record of transactions between the *parganā amīn* or assessment officer and the cultivators at the time of assessment. The records included the contracts made with cultivators about the payment of revenue after enquiring into the agricultural assets of every tenant, the boundaries of the lands and estimation of the amount of arable and waste land in each village. A copy was to be sent to the ‘*āmil*’ as well as to the *bitīkchī*. Having received these records from each *parganā* accountant, the *bitīkchī* would complete the survey of the villages of a *sarkār*, make an estimate of the total lands of each village

<sup>129</sup> P. Saan, *op. cit.*, p. 296.

<sup>130</sup> *Khulasātus-Siyāq*, fol. 79a.

<sup>131</sup> J. N. Sarkar, *op. cit.*, pp., 191, 195.

<sup>132</sup> *Ā’in-i-Akbarī* (Jarrett), vol. II, pp. 47-48.

and then finally work out the assessment of each cultivator.<sup>133</sup> On the basis of the *bitīkchī*'s records the 'āmil or *karorī* would collect the revenue. Another duty of the *bitīkchī* was to record monthly income, expenditure and balance. At the end of the year he would submit the accounts through the 'āmil of the *sarkār* to the provincial *dīwān*.<sup>134</sup> Besides the assessment of land, the inspection of the collection of revenue according to assessment was the duty of the *parganā amīn*.<sup>135</sup> The *patwarī* was the village accountant. He kept records of such matters as the holdings of the villagers and the government dues to be collected from them.<sup>136</sup> It seems that two independent systems of accounts were maintained of which the *patwarī* kept one and the *bitīkchī* another.

The *Fotadār* or *Khāzānadār* was the treasurer of the *parganā*. The *Khāzānadār* had to inform the *Kārkūn* and the *Shiqdār* about regular deposits in the treasury. In order to keep his accounts in agreement with those of the *patwarī*, his ledger was to be signed by the *patwarī*. The treasurer was not empowered to make any disbursements without an order of the provincial *dīwān*.<sup>137</sup>

Such was the general procedure of the revenue department in a province, but owing to the paucity of relevant material it is difficult to say how far these general regulations were followed in Bengal. However, the occasional reference to a *bitīkchī* or *kārkūn* or *patwarī* in the English correspondence suggests that pattern described above.

The *qānūngos*, a hereditary class of local assessors, were

<sup>133</sup> *Khulasātu-s Siyāq*, ff. 73b-74a.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> J. N. Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

<sup>136</sup> *Khulāsatu-s Siyāq*, fol. 91b, 92a.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 84b, *Nigārnāmā-i-Munshi*, B. M. A. M., No. 1735 fol. 177b.

important functionaries in the revenue administration. According to Abū'l Fazal "there is one in every district (*parganā*). At the present time the share of the *qānūngo* (one per cent of the produce) is remitted and the three classes of them are paid by the state according to their rank. The salary of the first is fifty rupees ; of the second, thirty ; of the third, twenty and they have an assignment for personal support equivalent thereto".<sup>138</sup> There is no evidence to show that in Bengal three ranks of *qānūngos* were in existence. Aurangzib ordered that not more than two *qānūngos* should serve in one *parganā*.<sup>139</sup> The *parganā qānūngo* was appointed by the *sūbadār* and his duties were to compile the codes indicating local usage and custom. They had to record all circumstances relevant to landed property, its revenue, value and tenure. They also had to keep records of transfers of lands and surveys of lands.<sup>140</sup> Thus it was the *qānūngo* from whom the government learnt the past, present and probable future state of the *parganā*. Before the *parganā amīn* drew up his assessments, the *parganā qānūngo* had to inform him about previous assessments, and when the *amīn* prepared the rent roll the *qānūngo* would sign it, and a *qabulīyat*, or agreement, countersigned by the *chauthuri*, was to be enclosed with it.<sup>141</sup> The '*āmil* of the *sarkār* would send a copy of the detailed accounts of the collections, arrears and expenses to the *qānūngo's* office. The *qānūngo* would check them with his own records.

<sup>138</sup> *Ā'in-i-Akbarī* (Sarkar), II, p. 72.

<sup>139</sup> *Mir'āt-i-Ahmadi* (vol. I. p. 263), printed text mentions ten *qānūngos*. Irfan Habib suggests that it must be a mistake for two, p. 269.

<sup>140</sup> *Mir'āt-i-Ahmadi*, vol. I, p. 263, *Nigārnāmā-i-Munshi*, fol. 116b-117a.

<sup>141</sup> *Khulasātu-s Siyāq*, fol. 74a.

The *patwaris* also sent their accounts to the local *qānūngos*. The local *qānūngo* was instructed to place all his records before the *ṣadr qānūngo* of the province. As we have no other evidence to show that the post of *ṣadr qānūngo* existed before Aurangzib's reign, we may take it that it was created by Aurangzib. A *farmān* of Aurangzib relating to the appointment of a *ṣadr qānūngo* in Bihar in the thirteenth year of his reign (1670 A.D.) shows the existence of the post.<sup>142</sup> Though it is difficult to ascertain when the post of *ṣadr qānūngo* was created it had great influence on the provincial revenue administration. The said *farmān* shows that the emperor entrusted much power to the *ṣadr qānūngo*, who was to act as a check to the growing power of the provincial *dīwān* and other revenue officers.<sup>143</sup> Both Salīmāllāh and Ghulam Husain Salīm write that the provincial *dīwān's* accounts were not acceptable to the imperial court without the signature of the *ṣadr qānūngo*.<sup>144</sup> Both authors describe how Darpanarayan, the *ṣadr qānūngo*, refused to sign the *dīwān* Murshid Qulī Khān's paper and how Murshid Qulī managed to get it signed by Jaynarayan, the joint *qānūngo*.<sup>145</sup> This reference indicates that in the later period of Aurangzib's reign, the powers and duties of the provincial *qānūngo* had been divided.

The Chaudhūris also played an important part in the revenue administration. The *farmāns* of Jahāngīr, Shāh Jahān and Aurangzib referred to by Moreland, show that the Chaudhūri was the *parganā* headman and his position

<sup>142</sup> P. I. H. C., 1958, pp. 431-432. It is the first evidence of the appointment of *ṣadr qānūngo*.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> Tawārikh-i-Bangālāh, f. 42a, *Riāḍ-al-Salāṭīn*, pp. 250-51.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, see for details Dr. A. Karim "Murshid Qulī Khān and his Times", pp. 108-110.



was hereditary. Succession was not however automatic, for a claimant had to secure recognition by the authorities. The documents show that the Chaudhūri was enjoined to encourage cultivation and to protect the peasants.<sup>146</sup> The preamble of Aurangzib's *farmān* to Rasikdas shows that when the *parganā amīn* had drawn up the assessment, the Chaudhūri put his signature on it, together with the *qānūngo*.<sup>147</sup> For his service he received rent-free land, which was described as *in'ām*.<sup>148</sup> In the later period of Shāh Jahān's reign (1656 A.D.) in Bengal one Raghab Dutta Raichaudhuri of *parganā* Patuli in modern Burdwan district was given the title of chaudhūri. Though in Aurangzib's reign he received a *zamindāri* of twenty-one *parganās* and his son Rameswar received the *zamindāri* of eleven more *parganās* in 1679 A.D., they held both the titles, Chaudhūri and *Zamindār*. In 1657 Abu Ray, the son of Sangram Ray, the founder of the Burdwan Raj family, was appointed Chaudhūri and *Kotwāl* of Rakhabi bazar in the town. In course of time his descendants came to own *parganā* Burdwan, *parganā* Senpahari and a few other *mahals*. In 1689 Aurangzib's *farmān* honoured Abu Ray's great grandson Krishnaram and confirmed him in the titles of Chaudhūri and *Zamindār* of the *parganā* of Burdwan. After Krishnaram's death an imperial order honoured his son Jagatram Ray with the title of his father.<sup>149</sup> The English Factory Records describe one Raja Ray as the Chaudhūri and *Zamindār* of Gopalpur, from whom they purchased land

<sup>146</sup> W. H. Moreland, "The Pargana Headman (Chadhūri) in the Mughal empire." *J. R. A. S.* 1938, p. 518

<sup>147</sup> J. N. Sarkar, "*Studies in Mughal India*".

<sup>148</sup> W. H. Moreland, *J. R. A. S.* 1938, p. 515.

<sup>149</sup> Rakhal Das Mukhopadhyaya, *Burdwan Rajvamsanucharit*, (an account of the genealogy of Burdwan Raj family), p. 5.

for their new factory in Malda.<sup>150</sup> It appears from the above references that Chaudhūri was an honorary title which was given to trustworthy zamindārs.

Part of the *Khālsa* land might be administered through revenue farmers known as *mustājirs*.<sup>151</sup> According to the *Nigārnāmā-i-Munshi*, after assessment, deeds of acceptance (*qabuliyat*) were taken for the *parganās* given to the *mustājirs*.<sup>152</sup> They would then take possession of the *parganās*. The amounts they agreed to pay to the government corresponded to the sums payable by the *r'āyats* on the basis of crop estimates. It appears from *Aḥkāṁ-i-Ālamgīrī* that in Bengal the *parganās* of *Khālsa* land were given to the revenue farmers and farming was known as *māl-zamini*. In 1676 Aurangzib issued an order which forbade the practice.<sup>153</sup>

We next consider the revenue administration in the *jāgīrs* granted to the officers and in the lands of the zamindars. Aurangzib's earlier *farmān* (1665) mentions the 'āmins and karoris of *jāgīrdars*,<sup>154</sup> which suggests that the administration of *jāgīr* lands followed the same pattern as that of *Khālsa* lands. According to the *Nigārnāmā-i-Munshi* the assignees had complete authority of management and administration of the *jāgīr*, including the power to appoint or dismiss 'āmilis of the former *jāgīr*.<sup>155</sup> The assignees used to appoint their own *dīwāns* and 'āmins to realise the revenues of their assignments. Rai Nandalal was the *nawāb Shāista Khān's dīwān*. After Rai Nandalal's death, Abdal Sūma became the *nawāb's dīwān*.<sup>156</sup>

<sup>150</sup> *M. F. R.* vol. I, part III, p. 24.

<sup>151</sup> *Bahāristān-i-Ghabyī*, vol. I, pp. 268, 299.

<sup>152</sup> *Nigārnāmā-i-Munshi*, *B. M. O. M.*, No. 1735, f. 119b.

<sup>153</sup> *Aḥkāṁ-i-Ālamgīrī*, I.O. No. 3887, fol. 207a-b.

<sup>154</sup> *Studies in Mughal India*, p. 195.

<sup>155</sup> *Nigārnāmā-i-Munshi*, foll. 118a-120b.

<sup>156</sup> *The Diary of William Hedges*, vol. I, p. 87.

Haji Muḥammad was Prince Ā'zam's *dīwān*<sup>157</sup> and Khojā Hābib was the *dīwān* of the *nawāb* Ibrāhim Khān.<sup>158</sup> In Bengal Hugli was generally the *nawāb's* *jāgīr*. But Dacca, being the capital, was the *nawāb's* residence. In that case, the *nawāb* sent his agents or *gumashtās* to arrange for the collection of revenue on his behalf. The arrangement often caused trouble to the *r'āyats*.

Generally in officers' *jāgīrs*, the particular officers were apparently the only authorities. They looked after the general government as well as the revenue administration through their own men. For instance in Purnia, Sylhet and Rangpur, which were frontier outposts, the greater part of the lands were vested in the *faujdārs* as *jāgīrs* for the maintenance of themselves and their troops. Here the *faujdār* was himself the *Karorī*. Collection of revenue in those areas was done by the *faujdārs* and there is no evidence of any interference from the *nawāb*. Moreover, the *faujdār* of Purnia, though subordinate to the *sūbadār* of Bengal, was independent of the Bengal *dīwān* in financial matters.<sup>159</sup>

As the *zamindārs* regularly paid a mutually agreed sum as tribute, their lands were not assessed. Regarding the revenue administration in *zamindār's* land, we do not get any reference in the available Persian sources. Mukundaram's *Chandimangal*, which was written in the later period of sixteenth century, gives an idea of *zamindār's* relations with the *r'āyats*. It appears from the *Chandimangal* that the system of giving a *patta* formally acknowledging the *r'āyats'* tenancy right was current.<sup>160</sup>

<sup>157</sup> H. F. R., vol. II, p. 33.

<sup>158</sup> D. F. R., vol. I, Part II, p. 7.

<sup>159</sup> W. K. Firminger, *Fifth Report*, vol. I, p. 409.

<sup>160</sup> Ed. A. C. Mukharjee, *Mukundaram's Chandimangal*, p. 105.

The *zamindārs* gave loans to the *r'āyats* in the form of cattle and seeds.<sup>161</sup> The *zamindārs* had their own *diwāns* and 'āmils or collectors.<sup>162</sup>

The rent-free lands might be found within the crown lands, the officer's *jāgīrs* and the *zamindār's* estates. Such lands were granted either as rewards for services rendered, or as endowments for the maintenance of religious institutions or shrines, or to religious devotees. This type of grant was known as *madad-i-ma'āsh*.<sup>163</sup> Under this grant the land was exempted from the payment of revenue. The grantees enjoyed the revenue from the land, but the tenure of such grants was only during the pleasure of the emperor or his successors.<sup>164</sup> The emperor could resume them at any time. They were not transferable. Even the grantees could not pass them on to their heirs without the imperial order. However, in 1690 Aurangzib issued a *farmān* by which *madad-i-ma'āsh* grants became heritable.<sup>165</sup>

*Madad-i-ma'āsh* grants were quite common in Bengal. Either the emperor or the *nāzim* conferred these grants. M. Sidiq Khān refers to a *farmān* of Shāh Jahān, who granted 22 *bighās*<sup>166</sup> of *madad-i-ma'āsh* lands to Shaikh Muḥammad, Shaikhs Imad, Abdallah and Adam, who

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 102, 105.

<sup>162</sup> Ramdas Adak, *Dharmamaṅgal* quoted in *Bangala Sahityer Itihasa* by S. K. Sen, p. 682.

<sup>163</sup> *Āin-i-Akbarī*, (Blochmann), p. 278. *Madad-i ma'āsh* literally means a grant of land for subsistence.

<sup>164</sup> W. H. Moreland, *Agrarian system of Moslem India*, p. 99.

<sup>165</sup> Irfan Habib, *Agrarian system of Mughal India*, p. 306.

<sup>166</sup> Bigha is unit of land measurement. It varied from time to time. The Shāh Jahāni bigha was equivalent to two or three present day bighas. The present bighas (in Bengal) is approximately one-third of an acre.

lived in the village of Dhubaria<sup>167</sup> in the *parganā* Atiā in Mymensingh district.<sup>168</sup> In 1640 Barakhān, the *faujdār* of *sarkār* Selimabad, granted 20 *bighās* of land to Sibram Bhattacharya, the son of Kavi Kankan Mukundaram.<sup>169</sup>

Mir Jumla confirmed in his own *jāgīr* many virtuous *a'immadars*<sup>170</sup> and some others who had received *farmāns* from the emperor. But when a *jāgīrdar* retired, his successor might or might not confirm his grant. Trouble arose in Bengal concerning *madad-i-ma'āsh* grants in the crown lands and *jāgīrs* when Mir Jumla died. The provincial *ṣadr* supervised the rent-free land grants. After Mir Jumla's death, Qāzī Rīzvī, the *ṣadr* cancelled all grants which were not derived from imperial orders. These grants were resumed by the state. He asked the *a'immadars* to till the land and to pay revenue.<sup>171</sup>

When *Shāista Khān* came to Bengal all the *a'immadars* and stipend-holders of the province complained to him against Qāzī Rīzvī, who had rejected the *sanads* and cancelled their subsistence.<sup>172</sup> One Friday the *nawāb* went to the mosque. After his prayers he learnt that an old *a'immadar* had suspended himself upside down, his head one yard above the ground, from a tree near the mosque. He was saying "shall my life return to my body or shall it go

<sup>167</sup> Dhubaria is situated in the Atiā circle, Tangail sub-division in the south western extremity of the Mymensingh district in Bengal.

<sup>168</sup> M. Sadiq Khan, "A study in Mughal Land Revenue System" *Islamic Culture*, vol. XII, 1938, pp. 61-75.

<sup>169</sup> D. C. Sen, *Vanga Bhasa O Sahitya*, (Bengali language and literature) p. 398.

<sup>170</sup> Bhattacharya, the descendant of Kavi Kankan, holder of *a'imma* grant. The words *A'imma* and *Madad-i-ma'āsh* were synonymous.

<sup>171</sup> J. N. Sarkar, *Studies in Aurangzib's Reign*, p. 166.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 167-68.

out—what is thy command ?” Being asked by the *nawāb* Talish himself went there to make an enquiry. The *nawāb* came to know that the old man’s son, who was holding 30 *bighās* of land in *madad-i-ma’āsh*, had died. The *amlās* now demanded from him one year’s revenue of the land. The old man wanted to die to set himself free from oppression. *Shāista Khān* conferred on him his son’s rent-free land and presented him with a large sum of money.<sup>173</sup> The *nawāb* then ordered *Mīr Sayyid Sādiq* to recognise the *madad-i-ma’āsh* of those who had been enjoying the crown lands according to the reliable *sanads* of former rulers. He further ordered that all rent-free land was to be confirmed in the *parganās* of the *jāgīrs* of the *nawāb* ; and revenue officers of his *jāgīrs* were directed to refund the excess collection to the *r’āyats*.<sup>174</sup> In the case of rent-free land in the lands of the *jāgīrdārs*, the *nawāb*’s order was that “if it amounted to one-fortieth of the total revenue of the *jāgīrdār*, he should consider it as the *zākāt* (tithe) on his property and spare it. But if the rent-free land exceeded one-fortieth (of the total *jāgīr*) the *jāgīrdār* was at liberty to respect or resume (the excess).<sup>175</sup>

Buchanan’s Report on Eastern India shows that for keeping in repair the *dargāh* of *Shāh māqlūm* and of *Shāh Qūtb* in Malda and for the maintenance and support of the servants of the shrines, there were rent-free endowments of 22,000 *bighās*.<sup>176</sup> The relics of *Gaus-ul Ā’zam Abdul Qādir* at *Munshurganj* had an endowment of 100 *bighās*.<sup>177</sup>

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>176</sup> M. Martin, (Ed.), *Report of Buchanan on Eastern India*, vol. II, p. 645.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 352.

The *zamindārs* made many religious endowments of rent-free land for the support of temples, mosques and religious devotees. The rent-free lands which were granted by the Hindu *zamindārs* for the support of temples, were known as *Devottāra* lands. *Brahmottāra* land was granted to poor *Brahmans* for their maintenance or to *Brahmans* who acted the part of *gurus* (teachers) and priests of the grantors. The *zamindārs* of Bengal were great patrons of scholars to whom they often granted rent-free land. Ketakadas, the poet of *Manasamangal*, mentioned that Varamalla, the brother of Raja Vishnudas of Vikrampur, granted him three villages in order that he might carry on his studies. The poet received the favour of that Raja because of his skill in composing verses.<sup>178</sup> Asad Allāh, the *zamindār* of Birbhum, was also a great patron of learning. He granted lands to scholars in his *zamindārīs*<sup>179</sup>

#### REVENUE SYSTEM

When Bengal was annexed to the Mughal dominion the bulk of the country was held by a number of chiefs and petty land holders, who enjoyed full freedom in their relations with the peasants and paid to the state dues which were in fact adjustable. The Mughals, like the earlier Muslim rulers, usually granted land to the *zamindārs* when they accepted vassalage. They, in return, were allowed to pay a *peshkash* or tribute which was ultimately a fixed amount of money. The land was thus divided into three categories, *Khālśa*, *jāgīr* and *zamindār's* land.

<sup>178</sup>J. M. Bhattacharya, (Ed.), Ketakadas's *Manasamangal*, p. 12.

<sup>179</sup>Tawārikh-i-Bāngalā, fol. 31. b.

The revenue system involved assessment of land, rate of assessment, medium of payment, and collection of state demands.

There were three systems of assessment, *ghallābakhshī*, *zabt* and *nāsaq*. *Ghallabakhshī* or crop division denotes the system of assessing and realising revenue by sharing the produce of land, whether by actual division or by estimation.<sup>180</sup> Under the *zabt* system the area of cultivated land was measured every year and according to *dastur-al ‘amal* it was then assessed.<sup>181</sup> *Nāsaq* was a system which denoted summary assessment on the village or some larger area as a unit. Under *nāsaq* there was no need of assessment of land every year. Once it was assessed, its results could be repeated.<sup>182</sup>

According to the *Ā'in-i-Akbarī*, the system of *nāsaq* was prevalent in Bengal.<sup>183</sup> *Khālśa* as well as *jāgīr* lands were assessed either by measurement or crop division. But in the case of *zamīndār's* land, apparently there was no such assessment by the government. It is a popular belief that Todar Mall made a detailed assessment on the individual peasants of Bengal. Moreland raises a question on this point as to how the figures associated with the revenue survey of Todar Mall come to acquire this authority. He supports John Shore who realised that the figures do not represent a detailed valuation of the country made by Todar Mall, who probably adopted the figures of revenue which already existed in Bengal.<sup>184</sup> One can agree with Moreland and Shore when it is found that the statistics given by Todar Mall extended as far as

<sup>180</sup> *Ā'in-i-Akbarī*, ( Jarrett ), II, pp. 44-45.

<sup>181</sup> Irfan Habib, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

<sup>182</sup> See for detail, Irfan Habib, *op. cit.* pp. 215-219.

<sup>183</sup> *Ā'in-i-Akbarī*, ( Jarrett ), II, p. 122.

<sup>184</sup> W. H. Moreland, *op. cit.*, p. 196.



Chittagong, which was never under Akbar's rule. Moreover, in most parts of Bengal large areas were left in the hands of the big *zamindārs* and thus it was not possible to assess the land in detail. The revenue which was claimed from the *zamindārs* was in the form of a stipulated annual tribute.

Coming to Aurangzib's reign, we find in the preamble of the emperor's earlier *farmān* that the *amīns* assessed the bulk of the villages and *parganās* at the beginning of the year on a "consideration of the produce of the past year and the year preceding it, the area capable of cultivation, the condition and capability of the *r'āyats* and other points".<sup>185</sup> If the peasants of any village refused this procedure or if they were found to be poor, the *amīns* assessed the revenue on them at harvest time by the procedure of crop division at the rate of approximately one-half, one-third, or two-thirds.<sup>186</sup> It seems from the above that the standard procedure was a summary assessment applied either to whole *parganās* or to villages. So it is apparent that under Aurangzib "*nāsaq*" was the rule.

The rate of assessment under Akbar was one-third of the gross produce, while Aurangzib's later *farmān* shows that the rate was one-half.<sup>187</sup> We have already mentioned that in some villages where the peasants were poor the *amīns* followed the practice of division of crops at the rate of one-half, one-third or two-thirds or more or less. We also find in the sixteenth clause of the later of the two revenue *farmāns* of Aurangzib that "If a man, whether Hindu or Muhammadan, is not the owner of a revenue-paying land, but has only bought it or holds it in pawn, he ought to enjoy the profit from whatever is produced in

<sup>185</sup> J. N. Sarkar, *Studies in Mughal India*, p. 188.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

it. Collect from him the proper portion which has been fixed ( as revenue )—provided that the share is neither more than one-half nor less than one-third (of the total crop)."<sup>188</sup> It is evident from the above that one-half was intended to be the working rule, while a one-third assessment was possible.

As for the medium of payment the *Ā'in-i-Akbarī* writes that peasants usually paid the revenue in cash directly to the government.<sup>189</sup> It refers to the directly administered parts of the *Khālṣa* lands alone, for Akbar wanted to encourage direct payment by the peasants. As the *Ā'in-i-Akbarī* shows that *zamindārs* of Sulaimanabād paid 213,067 *dāms* to the government,<sup>190</sup> it indicates that the payment was made in cash. Aurangzīb's *farmān* also favoured cash payment.

During Akbar's time revenue was collected in eight monthly instalments.<sup>191</sup> According to the *Bahāristān Ghaybī* there were two collections in the year, one at the autumn harvest and the other in the spring.<sup>192</sup> Though the system continued under Aurangzīb, his earlier *farmān* states that "the collection of revenue should be begun and the payment demanded at the appointed time, according to the mode agreed upon in every *parganā* for the payment of the instalments of revenue. And you yourself should every week call for reports and urge them not to let any portion of the fixed instalments fall into arrears. If by chance a part of the first instalment remains unrealised, collect it at the time of second instalment."<sup>193</sup> This indicates that revenue could be collected in instalments.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.

<sup>189</sup> *Ā'in-i-Akbarī*, ( Jarrett ), II, p. 121.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>192</sup> *Bahāristān-i-Ghaybī*, vol. II pp 779-80

<sup>193</sup> J. N. Sarkar *Studies in Mughal India*, p. 192.

It is however necessary to discuss how much revenue was assessed for Bengal under *nāsaq* system. Todar Mall's rent roll divided Bengal into nineteen *sarkārs* including *khālśa jāgīr* and *zamindār's* land. He assessed the revenue against each *sarkār*, including *sair* duties. According to it, the total revenue of Bengal amounted to 42,77,26,082 *dāms* or Rs. 1,06,93,152. This amount formed the *asl jama*<sup>194</sup> or original rent. Chittagong, which did not come under Mughal control until 1665-66, was assessed at Rs.2,85,067.<sup>195</sup> However, Todar Mall's assessment was of great importance because every subsequent increase had been calculated on the basis of it.

The rent roll of Todar Mall remained in force until the second *sūbadārship* of *Shāh Shujā'* (from 1639 to 1659) who revised it in 1658 chiefly by adding the revenue of new territory in the north east, of the Sundarbans in the south and of Medinipur and Balasore which had been detached from Orissa. But the revision he made was itself based on the original figures attributed to Todar Mall. Moreland says "this revision does not represent a fresh valuation of the province but only a compilation of the modifications which had taken place as the result of territorial changes or other causes." James Grant in his "Analysis of the Finances of Bengal" shows that the total revenue from fifteen *sarkārs* newly added by *Shāh Shujā'* amounted to Rs. 14,35,593 ; and "ezafa or increase on a hustabud or new valuation of ancient and actual revenue throughout the interior districts amounted to Rs. 9,87,162."<sup>196</sup> So the old *sarkārs* had a new valuation. The

<sup>194</sup>The word *jama'* carries the general sense of "aggregation" or "total". In revenue administration it means the amount assessed.

<sup>195</sup>W. K. Firminger, *Fifth Report*, vol. I. p. 242.

<sup>196</sup>Firminger, *Fifth Report*, p. 249.

new settlement however shows a different statement of the annual revenue. The original rent roll of Akbar's time excluding *jāgīr* lands amounted to Rs. 63,44,260. This increased during *Shāh Shujā'*'s time to Rs. 87,67,015—an increase of 24 lakhs on the *Asl jama'* of Todar Mall. The revenue of *jāgīr* lands, amounting to Rs. 43,48,892, remained constant over a period of 76 years from the first settlement concluded by Todar Mall in 1582 to that of *Shāh Shujā'* in 1658. The total of the assessment put down in the *Ā'in-i-Akbarī* was 42,77,26,082 *dāms* or Rs. 1,06,93,152 ; the total of the improved rent roll of *Shāh Shujā'* was 52,46,36,240 *dāms* or Rs. 1,31,15,907.

Such was the condition of revenue of Bengal, when Mīr Jumla, the first *nāẓīm* of Bengal under Aurangzīb, arrived on the scene. The first *dastūr-al 'amal*<sup>197</sup> of Aurangzīb's reign puts Bengal's revenue at 52,46,36,240 *dāms* or Rs. 1,31,15,907. It also puts the *hāsil* or total revenue collected at Rs. 86,19,247.<sup>198</sup> The figure comes near to *Shāh Shujā'*'s new settlement of *Khālśa* revenue which amounted to Rs. 87,67,015. The entire *Khālśa* revenue, as a rule, was to be sent to the central treasury. As the *hāsil* figure was written in terms of rupees it appears that the *Khālśa* revenue was sent in rupees.

However, Mīr Jumla was engaged in war with Assam in 1660 and he could not possibly improve the rent roll.

<sup>197</sup> According to Irfan Habib (p. 412) the date of this *dastūr-al 'amal* (Add 6598) is wrong. "It was written in the third regnal (year) of Aurangzīb, which is said to have corresponded to Fasli and for San-i julus, the year of the accession. Moreover, 1069 Fasli and 1065 A. H. do not correspond either with Aurangzīb's third regnal year or with each other. It has to be supposed that the eras of 1069 and 1065 have been interchanged and that the work was actually written in Aurangzīb's first regnal year 1069 A. H. and 1065 Fasli".

<sup>198</sup> B. M. A. M. No. 6598 fol. 132a.

Under *Shāista Khān*, who came after *Mīr Jumla*, Kuch Bihar in 1665, and Chittagong in 1666, were annexed to Bengal, but there is no record of *jama'* (assessment) or *hāsil* (collection) statistics in the available Persian sources up to the year 1666. Only in Tavernier's accounts we find that Rs. 55,00,000 were sent to the central treasury in 1665.<sup>199</sup> It shows that the amount which was sent to the centre in 1665 was much less than the amount which was assessed in 1658. But it seems that the preparations for war which took place in 1665, to conquer Chittagong, perhaps curtailed the *Khālṣa* revenue. In 1667 we find that the *jama'* of Bengal amounted to 52,37,39,100 *dāms*<sup>200</sup> (Rs. 1,30,93,477). The figure shows no improvement of assessment but rather a little fall from the original rent roll. We have no definite reason for this fall, but it might be due to natural calamities.

After *Shāista Khān*, *Fidāi Khan* and *Muḥammad Ā'zam* came to Bengal; subsequently *Shāista Khān* was again appointed to the government of Bengal. Then he was replaced by *Bahādūr Khān*, who was recalled by the emperor in July 1689. *Ibrāhim Khān* came in August 1689. There is no revenue record from 1668 to 1690, but evidently there was no improvement in the assessed revenues of Bengal, for we find the same *jama'* figure in *Ẓawābit-i-Ālamgīrī* which was written in 1691. It puts the whole of Bengal revenue at 52,46,36,240 *dāms*<sup>201</sup> (Rs. 1,31,15,907). But the figure of *hāsil* or amount collected which is written by the side of the *jama'* causes confusion. It puts *hāsil* at Rs. 46,19,749. The figure shows a heavy fall from the previous years 1659 and 1665.

<sup>199</sup> Tavernier, *Travels in India*, vol. I, p. 114.

<sup>200</sup> *Mir'āt-al-alam*, B.M.A.M., No. 7657, fol. 2.

<sup>201</sup> *Ẓawābit-i-Ālamgīrī*, B.M.O.M., No. 1641, fol. 6a.

There is another copy of the *dastūr-al-‘amal* in the India Office Library.<sup>202</sup> According to J. N. Sarkar this *dastūr-al-‘amal* whose number is 370 and *Zawābit-i-‘Ālamgīrī* “are copies of the same work, in spite of the difference in their titles and the fact that they were transcribed from different manuscripts. They give figures up to the thirty-third year of the Emperor’s reign, i.e. 1680 A.D.”<sup>203</sup> but in fact the manuscript 370 also gives different figures for the *jama‘* and the *hāsil*. According to it the *jama‘* amounted to 52,64,36,104 *dāms* (Rs.1,31,60,902) and *hāsil* amounted to Rs.3,86,19,247.<sup>204</sup> Though its *hāsil* figure does not corroborate the *Zawābit-i-‘Ālamgīrī*, its *jama‘* figure comes nearer to those of the *Zawābit-i-‘Ālamgīrī*, but Mss.370’s *hāsil* figure of Rs.386,19,247 is almost corroborated by the *dastur-al-‘amal* of 1659 and by Jagjivandas’s *Muntakhābu-t-Tawārikh* written in 1709 A.D. In the *Muntakhābu-t-Tawārikh* we find that the *jama‘* amounted to Rs.86,19,247.<sup>205</sup> It seems therefore that the figure of Rs.46,19,749 which was written in the *Zawābit-i-‘Ālmamgīrī* may be a mistake.

It is remarkable that the addition of the tracts of Kuch Behar and Chittagong brought no increase in the total assessed revenue of Bengal. Though in *Shāh Shujā*’s improved rent roll, Kuch Behar formed a *sarkār* and was assessed at Rs. 3,27,794,<sup>206</sup> it paid a *peshkash* or tribute whose amounts varied from time to time. There was no regularity of payments. *Shāista Khān* wrote in 1685 to the emperor, that taking advantage of the rainy season when there was no possibility of military

<sup>202</sup> Now it is called Commonwealth Relations Office.

<sup>203</sup> J. N. Sarkar, *Mughal Administration*, p. 259.

<sup>204</sup> I. O. No. 370, Ethe No. 415, fol 75a.

<sup>205</sup> *Muntakhābu-t-Tawārikh*, B. M. A. M. No. 26, 253, fol. 53a.

<sup>206</sup> Firminger, *Fifth Report*, p. 246.

operations in Kuch Behar, Modh Narayan, its *Zamindār*, who had promised ten lakhs of rupees as his tribute, had stopped payment.<sup>207</sup>

After its conquest Chittagong was left under several officers, who were entrusted with defending the province against the Magh attacks. The revenue which was collected went into their hands. Consequently, no rent was being collected from Chittagong after its annexation to Bengal. Only in 1713, when it was found that the revenue of Chittagong showed an excess after covering the charges for the defence of the country, a government share was fixed at Rs. 68,422.<sup>208</sup> These circumstances thus explain why there was no revision in the assessment of Bengal revenue after the subjugation of Chittagong and Kuch Behar.

Where Bengal's revenue figures represented the valuation or demand, has been questioned by Moreland and James Grant. Moreland took them as valuation, while Grant took them as demand. Moreland says "The Bengal figures which Grant took as showing Todar Mall's assessment of Demand, would, on this view, be in fact the first and summary valuation of a newly acquired province, made by Todar Mall or under his orders on the basis of whatever data were available at the time of annexation, probably the records maintained by the former government. This view clears up the obvious difficulty that Todar Mall could not possibly have assessed in detail the demand on those portions of eastern Bengal which had not fallen into Akbar's hands".<sup>209</sup> Moreland defines valuation "as an estimate of the probable future

<sup>207</sup> History of Bengal, vol. II, p. 376.

<sup>208</sup> A. M. Sirajuddin, "The Revenue Administration of Chittagong" (an unpublished thesis), p. 25.

<sup>209</sup> W.H. Moreland, *The Agrarian System of Moslem India*, p. 196.

income from any area, required in order to facilitate the allocation of Grants or Assignments to claimants entitled to a stated income".<sup>210</sup> He defines 'Demand' as the amount or value of produce which is claimed as a share by the state.<sup>211</sup> It has been said previously that, at the time of the Mughal conquest, there were larger and petty land-holders in Bengal. A fixed amount of money was paid by them as their tribute. The *Ā'in-i-Akbarī* shows that the *zamindārs* of *sarkārs* Sulaimanabād, Satgāon and Madaran used to pay a yearly revenue including customs of 43,758,088 *dāms* or Rs. 10,93,952.<sup>212</sup> William Hedges, the agent of the English East India Company, refers to a village called Rewee, "belonging to Wooderay (Udai Ray) a *Jemadar*, that owns all the country on that side of the water almost as far as over against Hughly. It is reported by ye country people that he pays more than 20 lacs of Rupees per annum to ye King, rent for what he possesses...".<sup>213</sup> In 1703 the English East India Company purchased rights over three villages, Kalikata, Govindpur and Sutanuti, from certain *zamindārs* for Rs. 1,300.<sup>214</sup> They were required to pay the land revenue according to the *jama'* or the amount assessed. The *jama'* amounted to Rs. 1,194 and 14 annas.<sup>215</sup> An old *sanad* which is kept in the Natore Raj family of Rajshahi reveals that in 1704 Aurangzib conferred the zamindari of Bhaturia in Chakla Ghoraghat on Balaram, the brother of Ram Krishna, the *zamindār* of Satail, for a fixed annual payment to the state of Rs. 25,32,46.<sup>216</sup>

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>212</sup> *Ā'in-i-Akbarī*, ( Jarrett ) vol. II.

<sup>213</sup> *The Diary of Willian Hedges*, vol. I, p. 39.

<sup>214</sup> *B. M. A. M.*, No. 24, 039, fol. 36a.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 36b.

<sup>216</sup> Prabhas Chandra Sen, *Bagurār Itihasa*, p. 128.



The evidence shows that a certain amount was fixed on *zamindār's* land which was assigned to him on that figure. It is noteworthy that the revenue of *zamindār's* land was also fixed on a permanent basis. It finds support in the available Persian sources, which show a constant *jama'* figure of Bengal. The total cultivated area, the volume of production, the prices of agricultural products, and the rent taken by the *zamindārs*, are not known to us. Therefore, *jama'* cannot possibly mean the demand on the peasant.

#### CHAPTER IV

### BENGAL'S TRADE AND COMMERCE DURING THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Sebastian Manrique, in 1628, found that every year more than one hundred vessels were loaded in the ports of Bengal with rice, sugar, fats, vegetables, oils, ghi, wax and other similar articles.<sup>1</sup> The vastness of the trade of Bengal surprised Manrique. In the mid-seventies, Manucci, Tavernier and Bernier observed the same flourishing trade in Bengal as Manrique had observed earlier in the century.

Because of her agricultural prosperity the entire Bengal area was as though Nature's storehouse. Moreover, abundant supplies of foodstuffs could be obtained at very low prices. Thus, during the seventeenth century, traders from many countries exported rice, sugar, salt and betel-nut to other ports of India and Asian countries. Even European traders operated with growing frequency throughout our period in the great ports like Dacca in east Bengal, Hugli in west Bengal, Balasore in lower Bengal and Patna in Bihar.

The trade statistics of Bengal are inconclusive, for travellers' accounts give us only lists of commodities manufactured and traded. According to these accounts Bengal carried a vigorous trade with Asian countries, but how vigorous that trade was cannot be accurately measured on the evidence now available. As Bernier says,

<sup>1</sup> *Travels of Manrique*, vol. I, p. 56.

Bengal “produces rice in such abundance that it supplies not only the neighbouring but remote states.”<sup>2</sup> Travellers’ accounts are however insufficient to indicate the actual volume of trade.

In agricultural production, the cultivation of rice in several varieties held the dominant position. On the same piece of land three crops a year were raised in many areas.<sup>3</sup> Ralph Fitch found in 1583 that Bengal was extremely fertile and produced much rice.<sup>4</sup> Manrique also noticed that rice was very cheap and the Portuguese were exporting rice from Bengal to Ceylon and Malacca.<sup>5</sup> Rice was both carried westwards up the Ganges as far as Patna and also exported by sea to Balasore, Masulipatam and other ports on the coast of Coromandel. The Southern and South Western regions of Madras and Bombay used to depend on Bengal for rice.<sup>6</sup> The Dutch exported Bengal rice to Batavia via the coast of Coromandel.<sup>7</sup>

For the price of rice we have the following figures per maund of 80 lbs :

1628	—	4 as 4 pice <sup>8</sup>
1659	—	Re. 1 <sup>9</sup>
1666	—	2 as <sup>10</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Bernier, *op.cit.*, p. 437.

<sup>3</sup> *Ā'in* (Jarrett), vol. II, p. 63.

<sup>4</sup> W. Foster, *Early Travels in India*, p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> *Travels of Manrique*, vol. I, pp. 33-34.

<sup>6</sup> S. K. Bhattacharya, *East India Company and Economy of Bengal*, p. 147.

<sup>7</sup> T. K. Raychaudhuri, *Jan Company in the Coromandel Coast*, p. 167.

<sup>8</sup> *Travels of Manrique*, vol. I, p. 54.

<sup>9</sup> Letter from the English factor, Ken at Murshidabad (6th Oct. 1659) to Hugli factors quoted in Foster’s *EFI* (1655-60) p. 292.

<sup>10</sup> The factor Samuel Baron’s letter to the Court of Directors quoted in *B. M. A. M.* No. 34123, fol. 36b,

Thus the price of rice in 1659 was four times higher than the price of 1628. This later price is found in a letter of the English factors who applied for an increase in the allowance for housekeeping charges on account of the great rise in the cost of living. Probably the factors exaggerated the extent of the rise and so it would be unsafe to accept the price as accurate. But we are justified in holding that a rise had taken place which was so great as to render inadequate an allowance which had been fixed less than ten years before. The factors of the English company state that "local prices had risen very sharply, but just eight years before such commodities as rice, butter, oil and wheat could be procured all at half the price or little more than they are in other parts."<sup>11</sup> We can thus assume that up to the end of 1650, prices in Bengal were abnormally low compared with those which were familiar in the English merchants.

Bengal supplied not only rice to neighbouring countries but also sugar to Arabia and Persia. Cesare Federici noticed in 1582 the flourishing trade of sugar in Bengal. In 1616 sugar from Bengal figured in the East India Company's lists of goods, sent regularly to Surat for export.<sup>12</sup> Manrique found in 1628 that 200 lbs. of sugar cost only seven or eight annas.<sup>13</sup> Bernier refers to sugar as one of the most important commodities of trade between Bengal and Golkonda, the Karnatic, Iraq and the port of Bander Abbasi in Persia.<sup>14</sup> In 1669 Thomas Bowrey found the sugar trade in Bengal even more vigorous.<sup>15</sup> The Dutch Company regularly exported Bengal sugar to the markets of Mokha, Ceylon, Persia, Batavia

<sup>11</sup>W. Foster, *EFI* (1655-60), p. 194.

<sup>12</sup>W. Foster, *England's Quest for Eastern Trade*, p. 315.

<sup>13</sup>*Travels of Manrique*, vol. I, p. 55.

<sup>14</sup>Bernier, p. 437.

<sup>15</sup>Thomas Bowrey, *Countries Round the Bay of Bengal*, p. 132.

and Holland.<sup>16</sup> Dacca in east Bengal and Hugli in west Bengal were the principal marts for sugar. Alexander Hamilton found in 1704 that *Gorghat*<sup>17</sup> and *Cottrong*<sup>18</sup> situated on the banks of the river Hugli, produced the best sugar in Bengal.<sup>19</sup> The English Factory Records also mention the best white sugar which could be procured in Cottrong.<sup>20</sup> The following Table presents the price of sugar per maund of 80lbs. in different periods :

1628<sup>21</sup>—3 as 1 pie

1659<sup>22</sup>—Rs. 2.7 as

1684<sup>23</sup>—Rs. 2.13 as 8 pies

Wheat was and still is an important agricultural product of Bengal. Bernier writes that in its production of wheat Bengal was not as famous as Egypt, but it was cultivated in sufficient quantity for the consumption of the country in our period and “for the making of excellent and cheap sea biscuits with which the crews of European ships, English, Dutch and Portuguese are supplied”.<sup>24</sup> According to Alexander

<sup>16</sup>K. Glamann, *Dutch-Asiatic Trade*, p. 103.

<sup>17</sup>Identified with Golghat in Hugli district. It was so called from the fact that in the bank in Hugli there was a semi-circular cove (gol=circular, and ghat=landing stage). This quarter of the town is traversed by the Naihati branch of the East India Railway and is connected with the other side of the Hugli by the Jubilee Bridge—Hugli District Gazetteer, p. 271.

<sup>18</sup>Kotrang—a town in the Srirampore subdivison of Hugli district.

<sup>19</sup>Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of the East Indies*, vol. I, p. 6.

<sup>20</sup>*H. F. R.*, vol. I, p. 258

<sup>21</sup>*Travels of Manrique*, vol. I, p. 35.

<sup>22</sup>W. Foster, *EFI* (1655-60), p. 292.

<sup>23</sup>*B. M. A. M.*, No. 39123, fol. 36b.

<sup>24</sup>Bernier, *op. cit.*, p. 438.

Hamilton *Calcutta*<sup>25</sup> was a market town for corn.<sup>26</sup> We have no record of the price of wheat during the early part of the period, but from Samuel Baron's letter we learn that in 1684 it was sold at 8 as per maund.<sup>27</sup>

Bengal salt, because of its low price, was an advantageous article of trade in the inland parts of India. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the island of Sandwip, which lies on the western border of Chittagong in *sarkār* Fātabād and Hijli in *sarkār* Maljhita were important salt manufacturing centres. Every year two hundred ships laden with salt sailed from Sandwip.<sup>28</sup> In 1765-66 the *Nimakmahal* of Chittagong district produced 79,00mds. of salt.<sup>29</sup> Under Muhammadan and English rule large areas in Hijli were kept under direct management by the government to manufacture salt. James Grant's Report on the Revenue of Bengal in 1786, states that annually each *Khālari* or working place on an average yielded 233mds. of salt.<sup>30</sup>

Prominent among articles of internal trade was fish. Fishing provided employment for several distinct classes of people such as the *jaliya Kaivartas* whose main occupation was fishing and the Muslim *Kabāris* who sold fish.<sup>31</sup> Fishing is a somewhat neglected topic in the

<sup>25</sup>Calcutta is a village situated on the banks of river Hugli in Hugli district.

<sup>26</sup>Alexander Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 6, European travellers generally use the word corn for wheat.

<sup>27</sup>*B. M. A. M.*, No. 34123, fol. 36b.

<sup>28</sup>J. J. A. Campos, *op. cit.*, P. 119.

<sup>29</sup>Alamgir Muhammad Serajuddin, *The Revenue Administration of Chittagong* (London University thesis, 1963, unpublished p. 292. Nimakmahal was the administrative department responsible for the collection of the salt tax, which was normally taken in kind.

<sup>30</sup>Firminger, *Fifth Report*, vol. I, p. 439.

<sup>31</sup>T. K. Raychaudhuri, *Bengal under Akbar and Jahangir*, p. 176.

economic history of sixteen and seventeenth century Bengal. The *Ā'in-i-Akbarī* records the estimated dues on the produce and piscary of rivers and tanks of *sarkār* Bazuha and *sarkār* Sonargaon as 261,280 *dāms* and 40,725 *dāms* respectively.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, it can be assumed that Bengal fisheries were in a flourishing state in the sixteenth century. There is no reason to believe that the seventeenth century saw any diminution of this economic activity, especially when we find that in 1775-76 the total *jama'* of the *Maimahal* of *Chittagong* district on fisheries amounted to Rs. 1480<sup>33</sup> ( 59,200 *dāms* ).

Other important articles of internal and external trade were ghee and oil, which were produced in most of the villages. When Manrique came to Bengal in 1628 he found in Dacca that ships were annually laden with these and Alexander Hamilton noticed them as important articles of trade.<sup>34</sup> In 1659 the English factors at Murshidabad wrote to the Madras factor that the price of ghee was very high, at Rs. 16 per maund.<sup>35</sup> In 1684 according to English correspondence ghee was sold at Rs. 7 per maund and oil at Rs. 3 per maund.<sup>36</sup>

Ginger and turmeric were also exported from Bengal. Ginger was one of the main items of export by the Dutch Company.<sup>37</sup> In medieval Bengali literature turmeric is mentioned as an important commodity of trade. In

<sup>32</sup> *Ā'in-i-Akbarī* (Jarrett) II, p. 138.

<sup>33</sup> A. M. Serajuddin, *op. cit.*, p. 286. *Maimahal* is revenue from fisheries.

<sup>34</sup> Alexander Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 6. Neither Manrique nor Hamilton mention what kind of oil was exported. In Bengal mustard oil was and still is in use for cooking. It may therefore be mustard oil.

<sup>35</sup> W. Foster, *EFI*, (1656-60), p. 292.

<sup>36</sup> *B. M. A. M.*, No. 34123, fol. 37a.

<sup>37</sup> T. K. Raychaudhuri, *Jan Company in the Coromandel Coast*, p. 178.

Ketakadas's *Manasamangal* the merchant Chado's cargoes when he set out for Ceylon included it.<sup>38</sup> In 1680 the English East India Company bought 200mds. of turmeric in Hugli at 12 as per maund.<sup>39</sup>

Fruits were abundant in Bengal. Bernier observes "Bengale likewise is celebrated for its sweetmeats, especially in places inhabited by the Portuguese, who are skilful in the art of preparing them and with whom they are an article of considerable trade. Among other fruits they preserve large citrons, such as we have in Europe... that common fruit of the Indes called amba (mango), another called ananas (pineapple), small mirobolans, which are excellent, lines, and ginger."<sup>40</sup> Bowrey also in the course of his visit to Bengal (1660—79) noticed that the Portuguese prepared in Hugli all sorts of sweetmeats from mangoes, oranges, lemons, ginger and mirobolans and also made pickles from mangoes, lemon, etc., which were all good and cheap.<sup>41</sup> Betelnut of the finest quality grew all over Bengal. In 1640 betelnut alone brought a daily revenue of Rs. 4,000 in the city of Dacca.<sup>42</sup>

Ivory carving and woodwork were widespread cottage industries. Shell bracelets and ornaments of coral would catch the eye of any visitor to Dacca. Tavernier noticed that Dacca sent her ornaments of coral, amber and shell to Assam, Bhutan, Nepal and Siam.<sup>43</sup> The shells were brought from Ceylon, the Maldives and the Madras coast. Bengal was famous for its mats, some of which were so nicely made as to resemble woven silk. Among

<sup>38</sup>Ed. J. N. Bhattacharya, *Ketakadas's Manasamangal*, p. 22.

<sup>39</sup>*H. F. R.*, vol. I, Part II, p. 83.

<sup>40</sup>*Bernier, op. cit.*, p. 438.

<sup>41</sup>Thomas Bowrey, *op. cit.*, pp. 193-94.

<sup>42</sup>*Travels of Manrique*, vol. I, p. 45.

<sup>43</sup>*Tavernier*, vol. II, p. 28.



them *sitalpāti* was and still is famous.<sup>44</sup> It is made from the stem of the *Pathirareed* (*Phrynium dichotornium*) for local consumption. Lac was found in Bengal and Orissa in large quantities and the Duch exported it to Persia. Shellac was used in varnishing toys and making women's bangles, of which there was an immense internal consumption.<sup>45</sup>

Descriptions of voyages in Bengali literature go to show that ships were constructed in Bengal. This is not the poet's imaginations, for we find in Ceasare Federici's accounts that ship-building material was very cheap in Sandwip and the people from Hugly and Sandwip were excellent boat-builders. He further mentions that, as excellent timber was available in Sandwip, the Sultan of Constantinople "found it cheaper to have his vesseles built there than at Alexandria".<sup>46</sup>

As Bengal was famous for its abundant crops, so it was for its textiles, which had great fame from the earlier times. It seems from the accounts of the early travellers like Duarte Barbosa and Ludovico Varthema that fabrics of Bengal had a ready market abroad. Barbosa states "In this city (Bengala, Pandu or Tanda) are many cotton fields—in it are woven many kinds of fine and coloured cloth for their own attire and other white sorts for sale in various countries. They are very precious, also some they call *estravantes* (*sar-band* or head band) a certain sort, a very thin cloth esteemed amongst ladies' head dresses and by Moors, Arabs and Persians for turbans, these great stores are woven so much so that many ships

<sup>44</sup> *Khulasātu-t-tawārikh* translated by J. N. Sarkar in *Indian of Aurangzib*, p. 41.

<sup>45</sup> J. N. Sarkar, "Industries of Mughal India; seventeenth century", *The Modern Review*, 1922, vol. XXXI, p. 629.

<sup>46</sup> Samuel Purchas, *Purchas; His Pilgrimes*, vol. X, p. 137.

take cargoes thereof for abroad".<sup>47</sup> Ormuz in the Persian Gulf used to bring from Bengal many *sinabafas* "which are a short very thin cloth greatly prized among them and highly valued for turbans and shirts for which they use them".<sup>48</sup> Ships from Cambay sailed to Bengal for its fine fabrics.<sup>49</sup> According to Varthema "fifty ships are laden every year in the place ( Satgaon ) with cotton and silk stuffs..... These stuffs go to all Turkey, through Syria; through Persia, through Arabia Felix, through Ethiopia and through all India".<sup>50</sup> Bengal also exported *Puravas*<sup>51</sup> and chequered *enrolados*<sup>52</sup> to Borneo.<sup>53</sup> The *Ā'in-i-Akbarī* refers to white, coloured, flowered and printed cotton fabrics which were produced in large quantities in Bengal.

The textile industry was the first and for a long time the only medieval handicraft to develop into a great industry. It was also the first industrial occupation to transform the whole of Bengal into specialised manufacturing regions.

The muslin of Dacca was renowned as early as the fourteenth century. Many and varied muslins were produced, both plain and embroidered, and took pride of place over all other cotton textiles. They were one of the chief articles of commerce within India itself and they became one of Bengal's main exports to Europe. They enjoyed for a time an unrivalled ascendancy. Abū'l Fazl

<sup>47</sup>The book of Duarte Barbosa, vol. II, pp. 145-46.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 92-93.

<sup>49</sup>J. Irwin, *Indian Textile Trade in the XVIIth century*, J.I.T.H., 1961, p. 46.

<sup>50</sup>*The Itinerary of Ludovico Varthema*, p. 79.

<sup>51</sup>It is called a cotton stuff. *Purnā* in Hindi means to decorate, to embroider, and "if interpreted in this light the stuff should mean embroidered quilt from Bengal."—Moti Chandra, J.I.T.H., 1961.

<sup>52</sup>Check muslin.

<sup>53</sup>Varthema, p. 80.

writes that the most notable production of Sonargaon ( S. E. Dacca, Western Tripura and N. Noakhali ) was fine muslin. In the town of Kiara Sundar of Katra there was a large tank whose water gave a remarkable whiteness to the cloth after rinsing.<sup>54</sup> Manrique writes in 1640 "The finest and richest muslins are produced in this country ( Dacca ) from fifty to sixty yards long and seven to eight hand breadths wide, with borders of gold and silver or coloured silks. So fine indeed are these muslins that merchants place them in hollow bamboos, about two spans long, and thus secured, carry them through Corazane (Khorasan) Persia, Turkey and many other countries."<sup>55</sup> In 1666 Tavernier came to Dacca. He found fine muslin, silk and cotton stuffs and flowered or embroidered fabrics being exported in large quantities to Italy and Southern France.<sup>56</sup> He further says that a turban sixty cubits in length "of a muslin so fine that you would scarcely know what it was that you had in your hand, was contained in a coconut about the size of an ostrich's egg".<sup>57</sup>

Thomas Bowrey, who visited Dacca in 1669, writes, "From Dacca the chief commodities brought are fine cassas (*khāsa*), commonly called Muzlinge (*Muslin*)".<sup>58</sup> Many different kinds of muslins were manufactured and some of them were given figurative names of their exquisite indicative texture, such as *bāft-i-hawā* (webs of woven wind), *ab-i-rawān* (running water), *Shabnam* (morning dew) and *malbus-i-Khās* (royal muslin). The *ab-i-rawān* and *Shabnam* were among the most highly prized, while no less

<sup>54</sup> *Ā'in-i-Akbarī*, ( Jarrett ), II, p. 124.

<sup>55</sup> *Travels of Manrique*, vol. I, pp. 56-57.

<sup>56</sup> Tavernier, II, p. 28.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

beautiful was the *jamdāmi* (flowered muslin). It is stated that on one occasion the emperor Aurangzib rebuked his daughter for exposing the charms of her person too freely, whereupon she urged in her defence that she was wearing no less than seven layers of *ab-i-rawān*. For transparency, fineness and delicacy of workmanship these fabrics have never been equalled and not all the improvements in the art of manufacture in modern times have been able to approach them. The implements used by the weavers at their work were simple and primitive. They consisted only of pieces of bamboo or reels roughly tied together with thread and so laborious was the process of manufacture that it is said that 120 instruments were necessary to convert the raw material into the finest fabric such as the *Ab-i-rawān*.<sup>59</sup>

In the sixteenth century Satgaon, four miles south of Hugli, was famous for its quilts. In 1630 the English in Bengal used to buy quilts of Satgaon, wrought with yellow silk.<sup>60</sup> Bowrey noticed in 1669 that Hugli was famous for manufacturing *sannoos* (a kind of fine cloth), *ginghams* (cotton stuff mixed with some other material) and *rumāls* (scarves).<sup>61</sup> Radhanagar in Hugli district was especially famous for manufacturing cotton cloth and silk *rumāls*.<sup>62</sup>

Kasimbazar, 100 miles above Hugli, drew the attention of foreign travellers for its silk. Tavernier wrote of Kashimbazar as "a village in the Kingdom of Bengala, sending abroad every year more than 20,000 bales of silk, each bale weighing a hundred pounds".<sup>63</sup>

<sup>59</sup>J.P. Taylor, "*A descriptive and Historical Account of the Cotton Manufacture of Dacca*", p. 44.

<sup>60</sup>W. Foster, *EFI*, (1630-33), p. 45.

<sup>61</sup>Thomas Bowrey, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

<sup>62</sup>Alexander Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>63</sup>Tavernier, vol. II, p. 57.

Bowrey mentioned as the products of Kasimbazar sundry sorts of raw and wrought silks, taffetas and a kind of striped cotton cloth inter woven with gold and silver.<sup>64</sup> In 1675 Streynsham Master wrote, "all the country or greater part thereof, about Cassam bazar is planted or sett with Mulberry trees, the leaves of which are gathered young to feed the worms with and make the silk fine and therefore the trees are planted every year".<sup>65</sup>

The gathering of silk, locally called *band*, occurred three times per year, the November *band* (from October to February), the March *band* (from March to June) and the July *band* (from July to the end of September). Of the three *bands* the November *band* was of the best in quality, because the worms thrive best in the winter season.<sup>66</sup> The price of silk and cotton cloths varied according to quality.<sup>67</sup>

Bengal textiles during the period under review acquired a fame unsurpassed by any cotton material in the world. The Mughal nobility, owing to the prevalent etiquette of making rare and typical presents to the imperial court at Delhi, encouraged craftsmanship. Regional and local industries thus developed through the patronage of *sūbadārs* and other nobles. Dacca and Sonargaon were the important manufacturing centres of muslins for the use of the imperial court. The best expert weavers in the province were selected to work there, their names were registered and they were compelled to attend daily at the appointed hours, until the different tasks

<sup>64</sup> Thomas Bowrey, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

<sup>65</sup> *The Diaries of Streynsham Master*, vol. II, p. 276.

Miscellaneous Factory Records, vol. XXXII, p. 35, *cf.* S.K.

<sup>66</sup> Bhattacharya, *East India Company and Economy of Bengal*, p. 156

<sup>67</sup> See *Infra*, Chapter VI, Appendix II.

assigned to them were finished. The best and finest kinds of muslins were reserved for the imperial court. Manufacturers were forbidden by imperial rescript to sell cloth exceeding a certain value to any native or foreign merchant. To supervise the carrying out of this order a special agent was appointed to reside on the spot to see that none of the finest muslins went astray. Fabrics not required for the Royal household might be disposed of as the producers pleased and much, in addition to that sent abroad, was despatched all over Hindustan and overland as far as Persia and the Arabian seaports.<sup>68</sup>

The flourishing textile industry not only catered on a large scale to the taste and needs of the Mughal imperial court and the provincial aristocracy, but also led to the development of Bengal's foreign trade. The most spectacular event in the history of Bengal's trade during the period of Aurangzib's reign came as a result of the export of textiles.<sup>69</sup>

Throughout the seventeenth century various trading nations of Europe, Dutch, English, French and even the Danes found fortune in exporting Bengal textiles to Europe. From 1669 to 1707 the English East India Company exported from Bengal raw and wrought silk and cotton goods in large quantities.<sup>70</sup> The large number of letters from the Court of Directors in London during our period regarding Bengal's muslin, silk and other fabrics indicate the growing demand for Bengal products and the appreciation of the advantages for the company of trade with Bengal.

Bengal in exchange for its cheap and abundant exports,

<sup>68</sup>Stavorinus, *Voyages in the East Indies*, vol. II, p. 45.

<sup>69</sup>See *Infra*, Chapter VI, Appendix II.

<sup>70</sup>For figures see *Infra*, Chapter VI, Appendix II.

<sup>71</sup>*Travels of Manrique*, vol. I, p. 32.

received all sorts of spices, ivory, ebony and many other luxury articles. Especially after the Portuguese settlement in Hugli in 1537 the bulk of the commodities came from the East Indies. Manrique gives a detailed account of the wares, which the Portuguese sold at high prices at Hugli in 1643. From Solor and Timor came red and white sandalwood. From Malacca and Banda clove, nutmeg and mace ; from Borneo precious camphor, from China great quantity of porcelain and various "gift articles (presumably for giving to local Asian chiefs and governors), such as tables, boxes, chests, writing desks and various curiosities such as pearls and jewels set in European style. Then there came cowries from the Maldives and conch shells from the Tinnivelli coast.<sup>71</sup> The articles thus imported by the Portuguese were carried to upper India, especially to the Court at Agra, by Indian merchants.<sup>72</sup> In our period we find that the English and the Dutch also brought cowries from the Maldives.<sup>73</sup> Cowries were in great demand in Bengal as currency for small purchases. The Dutch ships also brought dried fruits, rose-water and precious metals from Basra,<sup>74</sup> gold and copper from Japan and tin from Malaya.<sup>75</sup>

The question may arise whether Bengal's seaborne trade, both export and import, was controlled by the native traders. The answer is largely negative. Barbosa found in 1528 that the Arabs, Persians, Abyssinians, Portuguese and Gujaratis who lived in Bengal owned large ships. With these ships they sailed to the ports of the Coromandel coast, Malabar, Cambay, Pagu, Tenasse-

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *H.F.R.*, vol. II, pp. 36, 38, 42., *B.F.R.*, vol I, pp. 15, 20.

<sup>74</sup> *Miscellaneous Factory Records*, vol. XXVI, p. 25.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>76</sup> *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, vol. I, p. 145.

rim, Sumatra, Ceylon and Malacca and traded in all kinds of goods.<sup>76</sup> But after 1537 the Portuguese revolutionised commercial activities in Bengal. Hugli became the chief centre of Bengal's trade; here the Portuguese settled permanently and from here they extended their activities to all the trading centres of Bengal, including Dacca.<sup>77</sup> The Portuguese ships every year sailed up the Ganges, the bigger ones being laden at Betor (modern Howrah) and the smaller ones at Satgaon near Hugli with rice, fabrics of all sorts, lac, sugar, mirobalans dried and preserved, long pepper<sup>78</sup> and oil.<sup>79</sup> They captured a part of Bengal's trade with upper India as far as Patna, where they disposed of the Bengal goods and those indented from other parts of Asia, and from where they purchased coarse carpets of Jaunpore and some silks. Thus up to the early seventeenth century the Portuguese enjoyed the monopoly of Bengal's seaborne trade—both export and import. They maintained their monopoly firstly by holding control over all the trading centres of Bengal and secondly by their practice of destroying foreign vessels—and thus they became masters of the Eastern seas from China to the Cape of Good Hope. But the Portuguese monopoly was not all pervasive and this enabled the native traders to carry on their transactions abroad. The religious literature of our period supplies us with a vivid description of the coasting voyages of the Bengali vessels from Satgaon to Patan in Gujrat by doubling Cape Comorin.<sup>80</sup> We even find

<sup>77</sup>J. J. A. Campos, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-56.

<sup>78</sup>A condiment prepared from the immature fruit spikes of the allied plants. It is derived from two shrubs *piper officinarum* and *piper longum*.

<sup>79</sup>Samuel Purchas, *op. cit.* X, p. 114.

<sup>80</sup>Ketakadas, *Manasamangal*, Ed. J. M. Bhattacharya. p. 36.



lists of ports, both Indian and foreign, in the religious literature. The muslins of Dacca were carried to Khurasan, Persia, Turkey and other places by the native merchants, most probably by the land route. Loyal noted the busy activities of the Bengali merchants in the Maldives in 1602.<sup>81</sup> In the early part of *Shāh Jahān's* reign Manrique met in Midnapore a certain merchant 'Mobato Khan' who transacted a large volume of trade with upper India. He found at Pipli in Orissa a big new ship belonging to a *Shiqdār* being sent to Cochin laden with merchandise under the command of a noble Portuguese.<sup>82</sup> Bernier noted the fact that Indians, "despite their cowardice", made long voyages from Bengal to Tenasserim, Malacca, Siam, Macassar, Mocha, Bandar Abbasi and other places.<sup>83</sup> Bowrey found at Balasore and Pipli some twenty ships of considerable burthen belonging to Ceylon, Tenasserim and the Maldives.<sup>84</sup> Thus the native traders did not completely lose their power over the maritime commerce.

Nevertheless, no prosperous commerce can be built solely distance trade. What makes the difference between a closed economy and an exchange economy is chiefly local trade in cheap wares. In the mid-seventies local trade was not scanty. There were very many *hāts* (temporary markets) in rural areas and the monthly religious fairs in the cities. Cesare Federici writes "I was in this kingdom four months where many merchants did buy or freight boats for their benefits, and with these barks, they go up and down the river of Ganges to fairs, buying their commodities with a great advantage, because that

<sup>81</sup> *The voyage of Francois Pyrad*, vol. I, p. 329.

<sup>82</sup> *Travels of Manrique*, vol. I, p. 19.

<sup>83</sup> Bernier, p. 435.

<sup>84</sup> Thomas Bowrey, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

every day in the week they have a fair, now in one place and now in another, and I also hired a bark and went up and down the river and did my business".<sup>85</sup> Ralph Fitch writes in 1582 "Here in Bengalla they have every day in one place or other a great market".<sup>86</sup> Later in 1669 Thomas Bowrey too notices that a large amount of trade was carried on at village *hāts*, which were held on fixed days once or twice a week.<sup>87</sup> The *hāt* system is still in vogue. A *hāt* is usually held in an open space, where vendors from the neighbouring villages and petty traders from a distance sell their goods. Business is transacted in all kinds of country produce such as rice, vegetables, spices, betel, tobacco, fruits, fish and earthenware. Here the villager disposes of his surplus produce and obtains what he himself needs.

The zamindārs had a territorial right to charge fees from each vendor.<sup>88</sup> In addition to these fees, the zamindārs' servants ( *nāibs* and *muharrīrs* ) levied tolls in kind from the stalls of fruit, vegetables and fish vendors.<sup>89</sup> We have no evidence of the amount levied such fees.

A considerable amount of business was also transacted in the mid-seventeenth century, as it still is, at the annual *melās* or religious fairs. Fairs and religious festivals form temporary centres of brisk trade and are the chief marts for the exchange of household products. We find in the *Ā'in-i-Akbarī* that annual market dues (*māndavī*) of Sarkār Satgaon amounted to Rs. 30,000, which shows how important were the local markets.

<sup>85</sup> Haklyut's voyages, vol. V, p. 411.

<sup>86</sup> Samuel Purchas, *Purchas His Pilgimes*, vol. X, p. 183.

<sup>87</sup> Thomas Bowrey, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

<sup>88</sup> Mukundaram, *Chandimāṅgal*, p. 106, Bowrey, *op. cit.*, p. 194,

<sup>89</sup> Mukundaram, *op. cit.*, pp. 107, 367.

The medium of exchange in Bengal's trade was cowries and copper coins for smaller, and silver coins for bigger transactions.<sup>90</sup> The silver coins were called *sikkā* rupees and the copper coins called *dāms*.<sup>91</sup> Forty *dāms* were equal to one *sikkā* rupee.

The problem of communications was not too difficult during the period under review. Different parts of India have indeed been commercially connected with one another from very remote times. In the mid-seventeenth century, Bengal had vigorous commercial relations with the other provinces. The inland and inter-provincial trade was carried on by land and river. The earliest detailed map of Bengal is that of Van den Brouche, in which the principal roads were :

One starting from Patna through Mungir and Rajmahal to Suti where the rivers Padma and Bhagirathi separate ; it then branched off : one branch passed through Murshidabad, Plassey and Agradwip to Guazipur after crossing the river. From Guazipur it continued through Burdwan, Midnapur and Bhadrak to Cuttack in Orissa. The second branch ran along the south bank of the Padma through Fatebad ( modern Faridpur ) to Dacca. These two roads were both known as Padshahi or royal roads.

Another road starting from Burdwan passed through Birbhum to Bakreswar then turned towards Cossimbazar and from there passed through Rampur, Boaliar, and Hazarhati to Serpur Murcha. It crossed the river Karatoya and ran to Sarkār Ghoraghat ( north Bogra, S. E. Dinajpur and Rangpur).

<sup>90</sup>T. C. Dasgupta, *Some Aspects of Bengali society from old Bengali Literature*, p. 24.

<sup>91</sup>S. K. Raychaudhuri. *Maymansingher Varendra Brahman zamindār*, p. 21.

The third started from Burdwan, passed through Selimabad, Hugli, and Jessore to Bhuana and after crossing the river it continued through Satrajitpur to Idrakpur where the river Dhaleswari and Lakhai united.

A fourth road started from Dacca and after crossing the river Dhaleswari continued through Pirpur and Bodlia ( where the Dhaleswari and the Jamuna separate ) to Sahazadpur and Harial of the modern Pabna district.<sup>92</sup> In the later period these main roads have been repaired and extended. The easiest and most frequented route from Bengal to upper India was by land from Malda along the north bank of the Ganges, across the river Kosi and Gandak to Chapra, Tirhut and Jaunpur.<sup>93</sup>

Although merchandise was carried on these roads by bullocks, the river traffic in the Bengal delta was of the greatest importance in the mid-seventeenth century. Bernier writes "on both banks of the Ganges, from Rajmahal to the sea, is an endless number of channels, cut, in bygone ages, from that river with immense labour for the conveyance of merchandise and of the water itself, which is reputed by the Indians to be superior to any in the world".<sup>94</sup> The Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers with their numerous branches, intersect Bengal in various directions so as to allow easy inland navigation. The large number of tributary rivers like the Ichhamati, Jalangi, Dhaleswari, Matabhanga, Gorai, etc., running through every part of the province especially East Bengal afforded excellent means of communication through which interior villages were within easy reach of travellers or merchants.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>92</sup> See Vanden Broecke's Map.

<sup>93</sup> *History of Bengal*, vol. II, p. 201.

<sup>94</sup> *Bernier*, p. 442.

<sup>95</sup> James Rennell, *Memoir of the Map of Hindostan*, p. 245.

The most important trade centres were Dacca, Hugli, Hijli, Chittagong and Pipli near Balasore in Orissa. These ports occupied strategic positions on the most important river highways in eastern India.

Dacca being an exporter of a variety of articles on a considerable scale, became the resort of many foreign merchants and witnessed an advance even more striking than that of Hugli, Kasimbazar and Malda. It is situated about a hundred miles above the mouth of the Ganges and is bounded on the east by the Meghna and to the west by the Brahmaputra, which after its junction with the Ganges is known as the Padma. Dacca had an important inland port known as *Shāh bandar* ('royal port') on the river Ichhamati opposite Narayanganj. The date of the foundation of *Shāh bandar* is not known, but presumably it came into being after Dacca had become the provincial capital. Dacca itself stands on the river Buriganga which was known as Dulai in the Muslim period. The Dulai bifurcated into two branches—one branch going to join the Lakshya river at Demra and the other flowing down to join the Lakshya at Khizirpur.<sup>96</sup> To provide internal water communication in the pre-Muslim days a canal called *Dulai khāl* was excavated, leading from the river Dulai. It goes north of Zindabahr and Goalnagar, crosses Nawabpur road and Narinda road, turns round Jaluanagar and Hal Sharafatganj and then re-joins the Dulai.<sup>97</sup> According to Manrique the Ganges river route from Dacca to Patna was via Amdampur or Dampur, three stages from Dacca, then through Azarati, the fourth stage from Dacca, and then through Rajmahal to Patna.

<sup>96</sup> A. H. Dani, *Dacca*, p. 25

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

The most important port of western Bengal was Satgaon near Hugli. Satgaon was situated on the river Saraswati which branches off from the Hugli river ( the Bhagirathi branches of the Ganges ) below Tribeni and re-joins it lower down in Howrah.<sup>98</sup> Satgaon was an important entrepot from which goods both local and imported were distributed over the country. Cesare Federici writes in 1567 that in every year thirty or thirty-five ships, great and small, anchored in the port of Satgaon.<sup>99</sup> But in the course of time the river Hugli diverted its current through the main channel and caused the silting up of the Saraswati which became unsuitable for navigation by larger vessels.<sup>100</sup> Thus Federici writes that the large Portuguese ships came up to Betor ( Howrah ), where they anchored. From Betor smaller ships sailed up to Satgaon.<sup>101</sup> The *Ā'in-i-Akbarī* also mentions that in the *sarkār* of Satgaon there were two ports, namely Hugli and Satgaon, at a distance of half a *kos* from each other.<sup>102</sup> Both these ports were in the possession of the Portuguese, and Hugli was the more important of the two.<sup>103</sup> It seems that the Portuguese found that the river Saraswati was navigable only by smaller vessels, so they diverted all the trade to the port of Hugli where they settled permanently. As the Portuguese withdrew trade from Satgaon, Hugli became the common emporium of the vessels of India, China, Malacca and Manila.<sup>104</sup> A large number of the native

<sup>98</sup>L. S. S. O'Malley, *Hooghly District Gazetteer*. p. 10.

<sup>99</sup>Samuel Purchas, *op. cit.*, vol X, p. 114.

<sup>100</sup>J. J. A. Campos, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>101</sup>Samuel Purchas, *op. cit.*, vol. X, p. 113.

<sup>102</sup>*Ā'in-i-Akbarī* ( Jarrett ), II, p. 125.

<sup>103</sup>*Muntakhab-u-Lubab*, vol. I, p.468.

<sup>104</sup>Miscellaneous Factory Records, vol. XXVI, p. 24.

traders and also Mughals, Persians and Armenians resorted to Hugli. The Mughal *faujdār* of Hugli even brought a charge against the Portuguese before *Shāh Jahān* of having drawn away the trade from the ancient port of Satgaon,<sup>105</sup> which was deserted. Thus Hugli, having the advantage of a situation upon the banks of the river Ganges whose branches spread far and wide through the country, became the most important port of Bengal from the later sixteenth century. The river Hugli also became navigable for larger vessels, for we find in the English Factory Records that large ships like the *Falcon*, *Arrival* and *Ganges* came up to the port.<sup>106</sup> As it was visited by the foreign and native traders, several indigenous industries of importance grew up in Hugli. Walter Clavell, who was the chief of Hugli English Factory from 1672 to 1676, writes that though the Portuguese were expelled from Hugli in 1633, it continued to be an important port and its trade became even more prosperous.<sup>107</sup> Clavell noticed that the Dutch exported from Hugli rice, oil, butter, sugar, long pepper, hemp, cordage, sail cloth, raw silk, silk fabrics, saltpetre, opium, turmeric, gingham and beeswax.<sup>108</sup> Alexander Hamilton found in 1704 that every year fifty or sixty ships laden with rich cargo left the port of Hugli. In addition, small vessels carried from Hugli the necessities of life to the countryside. The vessels which brought saltpetre from Patna to Hugli were fifty yards long, five broad and two-and-a-half deep. Each could carry above two hundred tons.<sup>109</sup> Hamilton further writes that the imperial custom house (*Baksh bandar*) was

<sup>105</sup> Abdul Hamīd Lāhorī, *Pādishānamāh*, vol. I, p. 434.

<sup>106</sup> *H. F. R.*, vol. II, p. 25 ; *H. F. R.*, vol. III, p. 50.

<sup>107</sup> Miscellaneous Factory Records, vol. XXVI, p. 24.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>109</sup> Alexander Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

at Hugli, so both seaborne and internal trade passing through it had to pay customs.<sup>110</sup>

It appears from Ralph Fitch's account of 1586 that by the end of the sixteenth century Hijli had become an important emporium. He writes that "Not far from Porto Piqueno<sup>111</sup> southwards standeth a haven, which is called Angeli,<sup>112</sup> in the country of Orixa.<sup>113</sup> ...To this haven of Angeli come every year many ships out of India, Negapatam, Sumatra, Malacca and divers other places and laden from thence great store of rice and much cloth of cotton wool, much sugar and long pepper, great store of butter and other victuals for India."<sup>114</sup> But its importance declined when the Hijli island was occupied by the Portuguese, who caused serious depredations on the coast by carrying away men and women to sell as slaves. In 1633 during *Shāh Jahān's* reign they were expelled from Hugli as well as from Hijli. In order to keep closer supervision on the sea coast of Hijli it was annexed to Bengal. By 1679 the English East India Company had established their stations there and larger English vessels had begun to load and unload cargoes in the port of Hijli.<sup>115</sup> From then onwards Hijli became another most important trade centre and the chief seaport of lower Bengal.

Pipli lay on a river, about fifty miles north east of Balasore. It was once the most important port on the coast of Orissa. In 1666 Pipli was transferred from the jurisdiction of the *nawāb* of Orissa to that of *Shaista*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> Satgaon.

<sup>112</sup> Hijli.

<sup>113</sup> Orissa.

<sup>114</sup> Samuel Purchas, *op. cit.*, vol. X, p. 182.

<sup>115</sup> *B. F. R.*, vol. I, p. 16.



*Khān*, the *nawāb* of Bengal.<sup>116</sup> It is situated on the bank of the river Subarnarekha, which was then a mighty estuary and admirably suited for a harbour.<sup>117</sup> From the close of the sixteenth century Pipli attracted European mercantile enterprise. But the silting up of the mouth of the Subarnarekha during the early eighteenth century led to the decline of the port.

The scope of Bengal trade was all the more remarkable because of the obstacles which beset the merchants. It is perhaps true that Bengal commerce could not have functioned as it did, had the obstacles in its way been quite as formidable as at first sight appears. Yet formidable they doubtless were, and none more so than the innumerable payments along the rivers and roads, at town markets and in ports. A contemporary view of these obstacles is contained in the following extract from the chronicle of *Shihābuddīn Tālish*, as translated by J. N. Sarkar : "From the first occupation of India and its posts by the Muhammadans to the end of *Shāh Jahān's* reign, it was a rule and practice to exact *hāsīl* (revenue) from every trader—from the rose vendor down to the clay vendor, from the weaver of fine linen to that of coarse cloth—to collect house tax from newcomers and hucksters, to take *zakāt* from travellers, merchants and stable keepers ...till at last in all provinces, especially in Bengal, it reached a stage that tradesmen and merchants gave up their business and householders took to exile".<sup>118</sup> *Shihābuddīn Tālish* proceeds to say that Aurangzib abolished the evil. But Moreland found that the lists of miscellaneous duties

<sup>116</sup>The letter from the factors in Bengal to the Madras authorities  
—Quoted in Foster's *E. F. I.* (1668-69).

<sup>117</sup>Milburn, *Oriental Commerce*, p. 250.

<sup>118</sup>Quoted in Moreland's *From Akbar to Aurangzib*, p. 284.

actually levied in Bengal during the eighteenth century bore a strong resemblance to those of the remissions ordered by successive Mughal emperors.<sup>119</sup> The total burden of the internal tolls was thus heavy. The general rule was to levy a duty of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent on the value of all goods imported. But evidently different rates were followed at different places. On 10th April 1665 the emperor Aurangzib issued an order that in all provinces there should be two uniform rates for customs in future, namely  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent for Muslims and 5 per cent for Hindus.<sup>120</sup> From 9th May 1667 onwards the merchandise of Muslim importers was declared to be duty free.<sup>121</sup>

Our general impression is that the main weight of the toll taxes fell upon inland trade, thereby reinforcing the self-sufficiency of local economies. But high tolls were of relatively little importance in exporting goods. Hence, rises in tolls did not choke trade altogether.

<sup>119</sup> W. H. Moreland, *From Akbar to Aurangzib*, p. 285.

<sup>120</sup> *B. M. A. M.*, 6598, fol. 84a.

<sup>121</sup> J. N. Sarkar, *History of Aurangzib*, vol. V, p. 319.

## CHAPTER V

# BENGAL AND THE EUROPEAN TRADING COMPANIES

The European trading companies were much attracted to the Spice Islands to the South East of India. These islands consisted of the Moluccas, Java, Sumatra and Borneo. Pepper, cloves, nutmegs and mace were their main products. For a long time spices were the most important article of export from the East. Pepper was especially important because of its widespread consumption in Europe. Soon the European Companies realised from experience that in order to trade profitably India must be included in their scheme of operations. The necessity arose from the fact that pepper and the other spices which they sought were ordinarily obtained from the producers by bartering Indian textiles. We have seen earlier that there were commercial relations between Bengal and the Indies. The merchants of Bengal carried excellent fine cloth manufactured in Bengal to Sumatra, Java and the Moluccas. On the other hand nutmegs, cloves and mace brought by the Portuguese merchants from the Islands sold exceedingly well in the port of Satgaon. Thus India, especially Bengal, was very attractive to the European Companies, which started their ventures in India at the end of the sixteenth century and in the beginning of the seventeenth century. Of all the agencies which were engaged in trade with Bengal during the period 1658-1707, we have the most regular and continuous account of the activities and dealings of the

English East India Company. But from scattered information available for certain years of this period it appears that the trade of some of the other agencies was as important as that of the English Company. While, therefore, a complete computation of the activities of the European Companies' trade in Bengal is impossible, a general idea of it can be formed by utilising the available material.

#### SECTION 1 :

#### THE ENGLISH EAST INDIA COMPANY

Before 1600 spices were supplied to England by the Levant Company from Antwerp. But that port was blocked by the Dutch.<sup>1</sup> Thus the original aim of the English East India Company after its foundation in 1600 was the acquisition of a part of the trade of the Spice Islands in competition with the Dutch and the Portuguese. In 1602 an English ship anchored in the road of Achin on the northern tip of Sumatra, where it was found that the port was so well frequented by Indian shipping that it was impossible to purchase pepper there.<sup>2</sup> The English soon realised the close commercial intercourse between India and the East Indies. They proceeded further south of Priaman, a vassal state of Achin on the west coast of

<sup>1</sup>K. N. Chaudhuri, *The Development of the East India Company (1600-1640)*. An unpublished Ph.D. thesis. p.7.

<sup>2</sup>D.K. Bassett, *The Factory of the English East India Company at Bantam*, An unpublished thesis, p.8.

Sumatra. There they found pepper for sale at a lower rate than at Achin. At Bantam in Java the price of pepper was also stated to be lower than at Achin.<sup>3</sup> Thus the English established a factory at Bantam. Though the first object of the English East India Company was to secure a foothold in the Spice Islands, another object was to sell English manufactures. But the Company was unsuccessful in its attempts to dispose of English woolen cloth in the Spice Islands, because they discovered that the only textiles acceptable there were Indian. In South East Asia and in the Indian Ocean Indian textiles were the medium of exchange for spices. This trading pattern prompted the Company to seek a market for its woolen goods in India, with the idea of buying in return the Indian calicoes wanted in the Spice Islands. The English first bought Indian calicoes at Achin from the Gujarati merchants in exchange for English cloth. As they found that the Indian textiles were popular beyond their expectations in the East Indies, they wanted to establish commercial relations with India. Surat, which was the most important and busy port of India, attracted the English. Consequently in 1608 William Hawkins reached Agra with a letter from King James I.<sup>4</sup> He was received by the emperor Jahāngīr. In 1609 William Finch reported to the Home authorities from Surat that there were fine *bāftas*,<sup>5</sup> *serribāff*,<sup>6</sup> *bairāmīs*<sup>7</sup> and all sorts of

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Cambridge History of India*, vol. V. p.77.

<sup>5</sup> Persian meaning "woven". A kind of calico specially made at Broach.

<sup>6</sup> "A fine light stuff or cotton whereof the Moors make their cabayes or clothing". *Hobson-Jobson S.V.* p.829.

<sup>7</sup> It is difficult to ascertain the exact character of *bairāmīs*. But in 1609 they were described as resembling the fine linen of Holland.

painted stuffs in abundance. He referred to the purchase of *serribāffs* for the African trade and of fine calicoes and such cottons suitable for Europe as well as for sale in Java and Sumatra—plain for sheets, towels and napkins, coloured for hangings, quilts and furnishing fabrics. By 1613 the English East India Company obtained a *farmān* from the emperor Jahāngīr to establish a factory at Surat. From that time calicoes from Surat were in great demand in Java, the Moluccas and Sumatra. In 1615 Sir Thomas Roe secured another *farmān* from Jahāngīr permitting the English to trade freely within Mughal territories.<sup>8</sup> Within a few years the English had established factories at Agra, Ajmer and Broach.

Up to 1618-19 the Company's trade was mainly concerned with pepper. In 1619 both the Dutch and the English made an agreement to work jointly in the Spice Islands.<sup>9</sup> But soon afterwards hostilities with the Dutch broke out in Java. Consequently the English were excluded from the most lucrative branch of the spice trade in the Bandas and Moluccas by the Dutch. Then in 1623, when ten members of the English factory were put to death by the Dutch authorities in Amboina, on a charge of conspiring to seize the Dutch fortress at Batavia, occurred the famous "Massacre of Amboina".<sup>10</sup> The setback received in Amboina resulted in turning the eyes of the English to other branches of the trade. In the meantime fluctuations of the price of pepper in Europe led the Company to secure raw silk and other commodities such as calico and indigo rather than pepper.<sup>11</sup> Thomas Rastell, the President of the Surat factory, found

<sup>8</sup>W. Foster, *E F I* (1618-29) p. VIII

<sup>9</sup>*Cambridge History of India*, vol. V. p.83.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p.84.

<sup>11</sup>K.N. Chaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. IV.

that the Armenians and Persians sent cotton cloths to the Middle East every year in English ships. The President was interested in developing the cotton trade to the Middle East. Thus they procured white cloth in the neighbouring towns of Broach and Ahmadabad and re-exported the finer sorts to the Middle East while the thicker ones were sold in the European market for household use.<sup>12</sup> Soon they found that the painted calico of Gujarat could be sold in the Levant, as the Moors made their *cabayas*<sup>13</sup> from this cloth.<sup>14</sup> So they re-exported the painted calicoes to the Levant. In the meantime cotton goods from India, both plain and patterned, had been favourably accepted in England. The plain cotton goods displaced the more expensive linens which had been imported from Holland and Germany. The printed ones were much in demand for table linen, bed furnishings and other decorative purposes.<sup>15</sup> From 1625 onwards we note a growing demand for Indian textiles in England. The sudden large demand could not be met immediately by Gujarat alone and therefore buyers were sent to Agra, Patna, Samana and some other places. In 1630 there occurred a serious famine around Surat and the textile industry of Gujarat suffered heavily.<sup>16</sup> The Company's factors were forced to find new sources of supply. Though the English were granted the right of free trade throughout the Mughal empire, no factor got as far as Bengal proper. But the factories at Surat, Agra and Ajmer did serve to introduce the English to the products of Bengal, which were a staple ingredient of the trade up the Ganges

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248

<sup>13</sup> Clothing.

<sup>14</sup> K.N. Chaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p 283.

<sup>15</sup> *The New Cambridge Modern History*, vol. V, p. 400.

<sup>16</sup> S.F.R. vol.II, p.37.

valley. This acquaintance at second hand with Bengal and its products was further enlarged by the English voyages to Pulicat and Masulipatam. On the Coromandel coast Bengal products were again much in evidence. Thus the attention of the English merchants was drawn to Bengal's products. But they found that the sea coast of Bengal was controlled by the Portuguese. The English therefore turned to a land approach. But they felt that the "transportation by land thither would be more hazardous than the benefit by the sale of a small quantity can answer."<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless the English could not but recognise how important Bengal goods might become in their trade. In 1631 and in 1632, the factors at Surat reported that white cloth from Bengal was selling at cheap rates which made it profitable to export it to England, Persia and South East Asia.<sup>18</sup> Bengal, they wrote, "yields store of exceedingly good powder sugar which costs not there about two pence halfpenny the English pound with all charges abroad...gumlac upon sticks is there to be had very cheap and is much required as well for Macassar and Persia as for England, silk may there be bought likewise yearly to a great summe at 4 in 5*f* (*anam*)s<sup>19</sup> the English pound."<sup>20</sup>

The expulsion of the Portuguese from Bengal however made it possible to open trade relations there. In 1633 some factors were sent to secure permission from *Shāh Shujā'*, then *sūbadār* of Bengal, to settle at Hariharpur in the Mahanadi delta of Orissa.<sup>21</sup> On 2nd February 1634,

<sup>17</sup>W. Foster, *England's Quest For Eastern Trade*, p.33.

<sup>18</sup>R.O.C., vol. 15, Letter No. 1536.

<sup>19</sup>Four fifth of a fanam.

<sup>20</sup>R.O.C, vol.15. Letter No.1536

<sup>21</sup>William Bruton, *News From The East Indies or a voyage to Bengalah*, Hakbuyt's Collection of Early Voyages, vol V, p.55.



the English obtained a *farmān* from *Shāh Jahān* permitting them to bring their ships into Bengal as far as Pipli near Balasore.<sup>22</sup> The Company was permitted to bring their ships up to Pipli only because the Portuguese had just been expelled from Hugli.

At this period the English were interested in the clove trade of Macassar. The port of Macassar proved an attractive market for the sale of Indian goods. Even the worst cloth provided by the new factory in Hariharpur in 1634 was sold at Macassar,<sup>23</sup> since it was recognised that Macassar was the best market for Bengal cloth by reason of its trade in cloves, which could be paid for with textiles.

In 1651 the English obtained from *Shāh Shujā'*, a *nishān* or sealed permit by which they were permitted to have freedom of trade in Bengal without any other restrictions, in return for an annual payment of Rs.3,000 only.<sup>24</sup> Again in 1656 another *nishān* granted by *Shāh Shujā'* to the English enjoined that "the factory of the English Company be no more troubled with demands of custom for goods imported or exported either by land or water...but that they buy and sell freely and without impediment neither let any molestation be given them about anchorage".<sup>25</sup>

The English Company thus having procured their first *nishān* from *Shāh Shujā'*, established a factory at Hugli in 1651. Within a few months, the factors were able to report to London of excellent prospects there. "These places of Bengala and Eurixa (Orissa) sufficiently manifest

<sup>22</sup> *R.O.C.* vol. 15, Letter No. 1519.

<sup>23</sup> D.K. Bassett, *op. cit.*, p.109.

<sup>24</sup> *B.M.A.M.* 24039, fol.6.

<sup>25</sup> Home Miscellaneous series, vol. 629, pp.5-8, *B.M.A.M.* 24039, fol.7.

that there is room enough for the employment of a very great stock ; where although the Dutch invest at least £200,000 yearly and some years find landing for seven or eight ships of great burthen, nevertheless your worships supplying this place with stock sufficient and honest men to manage it, will soone find a great business and as much profit ; when, besides for the shipping your worships shall design to return for Europe there may be sufficient to imploy to Persia the Red Sea, Achin, Pegu, Tenassarim and Ceylon..."<sup>26</sup> By 1658 another factory was opened at Kasimbazar, the emporium of the silk trade. Next came the factory at Patna, which became the chief centre of the saltpetre trade.<sup>27</sup>

Thus the Company started their trade in Bengal. In the meantime the news of *Shāh Jahān's* illness reached Bengal (1657) and *Shāh Shujā'* set out to contest the imperial throne.

*Shah Shujā'*'s defeat in the Mughal war of succession of 1657-58, jeopardised the rights granted by him to the East India Company. Would the successful contestant, Aurangzib, recognise *Shujā'*'s *nishān* of 1651 as binding upon himself? The answer was no. Mir Jumla, the first of Aurangzib's *sūbadārs* in Bengal, was however prepared to tolerate the trading activity of the East India Company in his own interest.

### *Mir Jumla and the English East India Company*

This was not the first encounter between the English and Mir Jumla. When he was in the service of the sultan of Golkunda, he had trading relations with different regions

<sup>26</sup> *R.O.C.* vol. 24, Letter No. 2435.

<sup>27</sup> *The Diary of William Hedges.* vol III, pp.194-5.

of the Mughal empire and also with Burma, Arakan, Pegu, Tennasarim, Achin, Macassar, the Maldives, Persia and Arabia.<sup>28</sup> Mir Jumla's junks were regularly piloted by Englishmen. He sometimes employed English private traders to conduct commercial operations on his behalf.<sup>29</sup> On 7th July 1656 Mir Jumla entered into the Mughal service as *wazīr*. In consequence *Shāh Jahān* conferred on him the Carnatic as his *jāgīr*.<sup>30</sup> In the meantime Mir Jumla's representative in Madras came into conflict with the English factors of Fort St. George. The friction between the factors and Mir Jumla's representatives was due to alleged incidents of oppression on the part of the latter. The English made an appeal to Mir Jumla, but it was in vain. Their sufferings led the Agent Greenhill of the Fort St. George to think of retaliation. In August 1656 the English seized Mir Jumla's Red Sea junk, a large vessel, and captured four pieces of ordnance from it.<sup>31</sup>

The seizure of Mir Jumla's junk was undoubtedly a challenge to his authority. The English believed that, on their capture of the vessel and its contents, Mir Jumla would come to a satisfactory agreement with them. But Mir Jumla was not the type of person to descend to such a humiliating compromise. The dispute over Mir Jumla's junk however was not settled in 1658, for an additional element of complexity was introduced into the episode by Aurangzib's appointment of Mir Jumla to Bihar and Bengal to conduct the war against *Shujā'*.

While the Bengal factors regarded themselves as free

<sup>28</sup>Jagadish Narayan Sarkar. "Mir Jumla's Overseas Commercial Activities". *JOBS*. 1945, pp. 262-64

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid*, p. 263.

<sup>30</sup>Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, *Life of Mir Jumla*, p. 141.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid*, p. 142.

from any responsibility for the actions of those of the Coromandel coast, Mir Jumla fastened the responsibility on the East India Company as a whole. Consequently the English could not procure saltpetre from Bengal. Chamberlain, the English factor at Patna, met Mir Jumla on 21st February 1659, with a present worth Rs. 600.<sup>32</sup> Mir Jumla refused to accept it, describing the English as no better than pirates and robbers.<sup>33</sup> Chamberlain tried to make Mir Jumla believe that the Bengal factors were private people who had no connection with the coast and that there was no reason why they should suffer for the fault of others. But to Mir Jumla the English were all the same. On the other hand saltpetre was so important an article of trade<sup>34</sup> of the East India Company that at last Chamberlain promised to return Mir Jumla's junk and his earnest appeal to the Agent at Fort St. George through the Balasore factors led Mir Jumla to grant the English a licence to trade in Patna.<sup>35</sup> But the Madras factors, rejecting Chamberlain's pleas and refusing to agree to the return of the junk, sought to re-open the issue of a trade permit for Patna through Ion Ken (*sic*), the chief factor of Kasimbazar, who was ordered to offer to Mir Jumla the usual presents, which he did in May 1659. The presents and the request were both sternly refused by Mir Jumla, who demanded the return of the junk and Rs. 40,000 but agreed to wait for two months.<sup>36</sup> The Balasore and Hugli factors decided to present him with Rs. 25,000 as a compensation. Early in June Ion Ken had an interview with Mir

<sup>32</sup>Factors at Balasore to the Madras Factors quoted in *EFI* (1655-60), p. 280.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid*, p. 281.

<sup>34</sup>See *Infra*, section II.

<sup>35</sup>*R.O.C.* vol. 26, Letter No. 2764.

<sup>36</sup>*R.O.C.*, vol. 26, Letter No. 2765.

Jumla, who granted his *dastak* ( pass ) to the English for their trade, provided they gave him a written pledge to make good all his damages within about a month.<sup>37</sup> But the English, taking advantage of Prince Muḥammad Sūltan's desertion of the imperial army which was under Mir Jumla's leadership, had not settled the junk incident even by the middle of June.

As the outcome of the struggle between Mir Jumla and Shujā' appeared uncertain, Johathan Trevisa, the second Agent at Hugli, followed a policy of "wait and see", as advised by the Surat authorities. Subsequently Mir Jumla ordered the *faujdār* of Balasore in 1659 to send up Trevisa to Hugli and to levy a duty of 4% on all English trade, besides anchorage duties on their ships.<sup>38</sup>

On 1st December 1659, Trevisa, together with Ken, left Hugli to negotiate with Mir Jumla. They came to an agreement on the condition that the junk was returned to Mir Jumla together with all captured articles. In consequence, on 9th February 1660, Mir Jumla granted Trevisa his *parwāna* confirming the privileges previously granted to the English by Shāh Jahān and Shāh Shujā'.<sup>39</sup> Before leaving Balasore Trevisa sent a strong remonstrance to the Madras Agent about the possible mischief occurring from the delay in satisfying Mir Jumla. The English trade, "the rising trade in India", was almost at a standstill in Bengal.<sup>40</sup> Though the Surat authorities had already on 3rd June 1659 ordered the Madras factors to make full and immediate restitution to Mir Jumla for his losses, to restore the junk and to pay Mir Jumla out of the salary of Greenhill, the Agent of the Coromandel coast, the

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, Letter No. 2764.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, Letter no. 2833.

<sup>39</sup> R.O.C. vol. 26, Letter No. 2827,

<sup>40</sup> R.O.C., vol. 26, Letter No. 2828.

Madras authorities still refused to act, holding that it would encourage him to advance fresh demands, for he would never be contented.<sup>41</sup>

However the Madras authorities did ask their colleagues in Bengal to find out maximum demands of the *nawāb* as a necessary preliminary to a final settlement. The demands made on the part of the *nawāb* were, according to a letter of 19th May 1660 from Masulipatam to Bantam, "upwards of 20,000 pagodas,<sup>42</sup> besides the denying of payment of 32,000 pagodas which he owes the Company.<sup>43</sup> The Surat authorities were not prepared to accept them. At last they wrote to Trevisa : "if Meer Jumbla will be satisfied with the return of his vessaile as shee is now, well repaired and made fashionable at the expense of much money it shall be delivered...if the Nabob will not be satisfied with this...we may proceed against the Moors in another manner of language."<sup>44</sup>

In the meantime, while there was a tug of war between the English Company and the *nawāb*, a new problem arose due to customs duties. On 28th June 1660, the Surat authorities enquired of the Bengal factors whether exemption from payment of customs had been granted by *Shāh Jahān* or whether it was a matter of courtesy on the part of the *sūbadār*. They were determined not to pay any anchorage duties as none were demanded in any port in the Mughal empire or anywhere else in the world where the English traded, and they regarded it as an unworthy custom. Of course, they knew that "though payment of anchorage duties might have been usual in the period of open trade, the East India

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, Letter No. 2873.

<sup>42</sup> Gold coins, one pagoda was equivalent to Rs. 3 to 3-8 as.

<sup>43</sup> *R.O.C.*, vol. 26, Letter No. 2847.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, Letter No. 2852.

Company stood in a different footing.”<sup>45</sup> A letter from Trevisa of 4th July 1660, acquainted the President and Council at Surat with the fact that Mir Jumla, dissatisfied with the result of the conference at Masulipatam, had stopped the English trade at Kasimbazar.<sup>46</sup>

In the midst of this chaos the Company's Agent at Hugli lost patience and seized a country junk in the river Ganges as security for recovery of debts. Mir Jumla became furious and threatened to destroy the “out agencies”, to seize the factory at Hugli, and to expel the English from the country.<sup>47</sup> It was only on the restoration of the junk and the apology of the English Agent Trevisa that the English were allowed to continue in Bengal. The mission of Trevisa succeeded well enough, for the English procured 15,000 maunds of saltpetre from Patna.<sup>48</sup>

Both the Madras factors and the Surat factors held the opinion that Bengal trade would rapidly become valuable in 1659-60 if “the oppression of the Nabob could be prevented”.<sup>49</sup> In view of this situation one may be surprised that in the same year 1660 Mir Jumla offered to supply the English factors every year with as much saltpetre as they would require.<sup>50</sup> If Mir Jumla was an oppressor why did he lend a sum of money totalling one lakh of rupees to Trevisa, the English agent in Bengal? The Madras authorities regarded the transaction as a personal or private loan to Trevisa, lest the burden might fall on the Company, but Trevisa accepted the money for

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter No. 2854.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter No. 2855.

<sup>49</sup> Bruce, *Annals of the Hon'ble East India Company*, vol. I, p. 560.

<sup>50</sup> *F.F.R.*, vol XIV, pp. 176-78.

the Company's business transactions and not for his own interest. There is no such evidence as would show that Trevisa himself was interested in the money. On the other hand when Trevisa reported that it would be better to pay Rs.3,000 as customs duty, the Madras factors answered : "Why should you pay a petty governor Rs. 3,000, what we pay to the King."<sup>51</sup> According to M. E. Wilbur, "the Nabob adopted a policy of petty persecution towards the English traders that was not conducive to an amicable relationship."<sup>52</sup> But one may notice later that after the death of Mir Jumla, when the English faced trouble, they wrote to the Surat authorities that "Khan Khanan was our great friend".<sup>53</sup> Bruce interprets the incident as follows : "The oppression of Nabob had been so great that the Agent at Hugli in 1660-61 resorted to the rash measure of seizing a country junk in the river Ganges as a security for the recovery of debts."<sup>54</sup> How was the *nawāb* wrong in demanding the restoration of his seized junk ? The *nawāb's* demand was either to pay the usual customs dues or to restore his junk. There was no question of oppression. Curiously enough, though the problem of the earlier junk had not been solved, the English seized Mir Jumla's junk a second time. The English took Mir Jumla's firmness and strict dealing as an oppressive policy. But Ion Ken, the chief factor at Kasimbazar, admitted that "Meer Jumbello is a very civill person and the chief general of Oranzebe. What he saies is a law and therefore he must be satisfied in some reasonable manner."<sup>55</sup> But that same reasonable

<sup>51</sup> S.F.R., vol. II, p.73.

<sup>52</sup> M.E. Wilbur, *The East India Company*, p. 245

<sup>53</sup> R.O.C., vol. 28, Letter No. 2976.

<sup>54</sup> Bruce, *Annals of the Honourable East India Company*. vol. I, p. 560.

<sup>55</sup> R.O.C., vol. 26, Letter No. 2754.



manner was not adopted by the English, who even in 1662 wrote from Madras to Bengal on 12th May : “you will perceive by the copy of our generall consultation that we have condescended and agreed, for the preservation of the Nabob’s amity, that now the junk cannot be restored, he may take his choice either of the “Anne” with all her ammunition and stores or of your new built ship. But this you must not seeme ( to know ? ) that we doe any way condescend to, soe that it may come to his knowledge ; for you know the Nabob is five times more indebted to us.....as this last yeare with 25 tons of gumlacke, whereof he payes noe freight, nor custome in Persia.”<sup>56</sup>

However, Mir Jumla after 1661 was busy with his Kuch Bihar and Assam campaign, so there was no further development in the negotiations. Neither the problem of his junk nor that of his loan to Trevisa was settled in his lifetime.

Mir Jumla’s death in 1663 led to some questioning of the English East India Company’s right of free trade. A letter to Surat from William Blake and Bridges, the company’s agents at Balasore, shows their uncertainty : “The governors [ *faujdār* ] in these parts by reason of the Nabob ( alias caun caun ) [ *Khān Khānan* ] his so long absence and distance have been so insolent and illimitable in their extortions that they have very much impaired the trade here. We expected a remedie hereto, if caun caun had lived who we always found a friend to our nations and shall have a sensible misse of in these parts, but by his death we may at present expect rather an augmentation than diminution of obstructions in the Company’s business in these parts.”<sup>57</sup>

<sup>56</sup> *F.F.R.* vol. XIV, pp. 221-224.

<sup>57</sup> *R.O.C.*, vol. 28, Letter No. 2976.

They further added that it was essential to have a copy of *Shāh Jahān's farmān* in Bengal. The Dutch had the *farmān* of Aurangzīb and they carried on their trade without any hindrance.<sup>58</sup> Mīr Jumla's *parwāna* had protected the English traders against all claims for customs duties. Particularly the exemption from customs duty was based upon an old *farmān* from *Shāh Jahān* which had not been confirmed by the reigning emperor.

The Bengal factors had for some months been hoping that the general *farmān* which the Surat authorities intended obtaining from Aurangzīb would include a grant of exemption from customs dues in Bengal and would in addition free the English from the annual payment of Rs. 3,000 which had been made for many years.<sup>59</sup> The consistent aim of the English Company was to obtain "concessions". Anyhow on the strength of this expectation they obtained permission to defer for three months the payment of this contribution for 1663, but as soon as the date expired the *faujdār* of Hugli forced Robert Elwes, who was in charge of the factory there, to pay the dues. But Elwes failed to pay and was imprisoned by the *faujdār*. A security of payment within five days had been signed and he was released at last.<sup>60</sup> Meanwhile, the news came to Bengal of the arrival of *Shāista Khān* as the *nāẓim*. It was decided that William Blake should go with presents to visit the new *nawāb* at Rajmahal.

#### SHAISTA KHAN AND THE ENGLISH EAST INDIA COMPANY

Blake's mission seemed successful at first, for he wrote to Surat on 21st June 1664, that *Shāista Khān* granted the

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *H.F.R.*, vol. I, p. 19.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

privileges which they enjoyed under *Shāh Shujā'* and his predecessors.<sup>61</sup> But the English soon found that *Shāista Khān* wanted to get the whole trade in saltpetre into his own hands and to sell it again to the Dutch and the English. He even ordered the English not to sell any goods or silver that were brought by the Company's ships, to any person but to him, at a price to be decided by his agents.<sup>62</sup>

The Madras and Surat factors wrote to the Bengal factors to take another chance in the matter of obtaining a *farmān* and to send a fresh representative.<sup>63</sup> So it was decided at Hugli on 11th July to give Rs. 500 to *Mirjā Sayyid Jalāluddīn*, the *faujdār* of Hugli, besides presents to his officers, and also to direct one of the factors named Henry Powell to go up to Rajmahal to meet the saltpetre boats from Patna and to pay whatever sum might be requisite to obviate their stoppage there. It was further decided to remind *Shāista Khān* of his promise to Blake that he would write to the Emperor to remit the annually exacted present of Rs.3,000.<sup>64</sup>

On 4th October, 1664, Blake wrote to the Madras factor that a saltpetre boat was stopped by the *nawāb* at Rajmahal.<sup>65</sup> Meanwhile, the court of Directors, hearing of all these troubles of the Bengal factors, were thinking of withdrawing the factories at Balasore and Patna. Ultimately, the question of continuing or dissolving the factories at Balasore and elsewhere was left to the decision of the Agent and Council at Madras.

<sup>61</sup> *R.O.C.*, vol. 28, Letter No. 3029.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, *H.F.R.*, vol. I, p. 25.

<sup>63</sup> *R.O.C.*, vol. 28, Letter No. 3031.

<sup>64</sup> *H.F.R.*, vol. I, p. 14.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

The Madras factors informed the Home authorities that they agreed to continue all the factories in Bengal.

In the meantime, *Shāistā Khān* made preparations for checking the Arakan pirates and he wrote to both the English and the Dutch asking for supplies of arms and ammunition.<sup>66</sup> In 1666 when the news came to Bengal of *Shāistā Khān's* victory over the Arakanese with the help of the Dutch, the English felt embarrassed. Consequently, they were afraid of continuing their business in Bengal. At the same time, an order came from the emperor that Balasore and Pipli were to be brought under the jurisdiction of *Shāista Khān*. Part of Balasore was also the *nawāb's jāgir*. The Bengal factors exclaimed "Especially at this time it falling under the power of a person most unjust and solely addicted to covetousness. Wee much feare the yearly present of this place ( Rs. 3000 ) will bee exacted, though wee may have noe shipp arrive ; the rent and custom of this towne ( Hugli ) being his (*Shāista Khān*) jageer".<sup>67</sup>

In 1668 the importance of Dacca, which was the capital as well as a centre for the purchase of fine cotton goods, led the company to sanction the establishment of a factory in that city. In the same year, the English in Bengal wrote to the Surat authorities that Pratt, one of the factors, had left the English Company and entered into the service of the Raja of Arakan and that *Shāistā Khān* was irritated at his defection. They further wrote that the saltpetre boats which were coming down from Patna to Hugli were stopped by the *nawāb's* officers who

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>67</sup>*R.O.C.*, vol. 29, Letter No. 3168.

openly declared that if the English failed to produce the emperor's *farmān* in future they would pay five per cent customs duty like the Hindus.<sup>68</sup> The Bengal factors finally wrote of the "Nabob" as "our enemy". May be *Shāistā Khān* was trying to get presents, but he was not wrong in demanding customs duty. He demanded from the English a  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent ad valorem customs duty in accordance with a *farmān* of Aurangzib of 1665 which fixed the customs of the empire at that figure. But in the hope of extracting more favourable terms, the Madras authorities urged the *nishān* of *Shujā'* against the emperor's *farmān* and continued the annual payment. *Shāistā Khān* could claim with justice that *Shujā'*'s *nishān* could not take precedence over the imperial *farmān* and that in any case, *Shujā'* was no longer *sūbadār* and the agreement with him was at an end.

In 1669 the Bengal factors decided to dispatch an embassy with a present worth Rs. 2,000 to the *nawāb* at Dacca to secure his favour in removing the obstacles placed in the way of English trade by his orders. Accordingly, John March, one of the factors, came to visit the *nawāb*. He was directed to inform the *nawāb* that the English were not responsible for the flight of Pratt and to secure exemption from an annual payment of Rs. 3,000 at Hugli. But as the *nawāb* was sick at that time, March had hardly any opportunity to visit him.<sup>69</sup>

More trouble arose in 1670 between the *nawāb* and the East India Company in Bengal. Job Charnock, who was appointed in 1658 as assistant factor at Kasimbazar, became chief at the Patna factory from 1664. In September 1670 he wrote a letter to the Madras factors

<sup>68</sup>R.O.C., vol. 29, Letter No. 3235.

<sup>69</sup>R.O.C., vol. 30, Letter No. 3370.

from which it appears that *Shāistā Khān* stopped the saltpetre boats, seized a quantity of saltpetre and sent his troopers to the petremen's houses to forbid them to deliver saltpetre to the English.<sup>70</sup> Business had been so hindered that Charnock was able to supply only 168,000 maunds instead of a promised quantity of 200,000 maunds of saltpetre.<sup>71</sup>

Though the privileges which were granted by *Shāh Shujā'* were confirmed in 1672 by an order of *Shāistā Khān* at the suit of Walter Clavell, the Company's chief in Bengal, in the same year the English had trouble from the Hugli *faujdār* Malik Qāsim.<sup>72</sup> *Shāistā Khan's* order was to pass the English boats without any charge of customs. But Malik Qāsim refused to give *dastaks* whenever his greedy desires were not complied with by making him presents, selling him goods at his own rates, transporting his goods on the Company's ships and piloting his ships in and out of the Ganges. The Bengal factors wrote to the Madras authorities that they agreed with Malik Qāsim's demands as far as was reasonably possible, but could not cope with them because of his too high expectations.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, he asked the English to produce either the emperor's *farmān* or the *nishān* of *Shāh Shujā'*, which authorised them to trade without any customs duty.<sup>74</sup>

The Company replied to Malik Qāsim that the *farmān* was at Surat. They could not produce the *nishān* either. The English wrote to Malik Qāsim that the *parwāna* on which they also relied for this freedom from customs or

<sup>70</sup> Miscellaneous Factory Records, vol. III, p. 140.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *H.F.R.*, vol. IV, p. 5.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

other dues was enough authority for him, as he was a servant of the *nawāb* of Bengal and had by virtue of the *parwāna* been passing their goods free for five years during his *faujdār*ship. The Bengal factors however decided to take the matter to the *nawāb*'s court. But they well knew that no remedy could be obtained unless they satisfied all the local officers. The Company had tried its best to satisfy the *faujdār* but it was unsuccessful. So the English thought that this trouble was caused by the Dutch, who had paid in customs between Rs. 30,000 and Rs. 40,000 a year as against their own annual sum of Rs. 3,000 and the usual small present to the *faujdār* and his officers.<sup>75</sup>

Anotner difficulty had arisen in Patna when the local Mughal officers seized the saltpetre boat of the English there. So Walter Clavell, the chief factor of Bengal, and his council, finding *Shāistā Khān*'s order null and void, proposed to Fort St. George that a *wakīl* from Patna be sent to the emperor's court to complain of the misdeeds of his officers in Bengal. But no answer came from the Fort. The Bengal factors repeatedly represented to the Agent and Council of India the necessity of getting from the emperor a *farmān* entitling them to trade free of the customs which the *faujdār* of Hugli demanded.<sup>76</sup> Without it they said "we shall have continuall troubles and great charges to run through their ( the Company's ) business in these parts."<sup>77</sup> The Madras agency informed them that the *farmān* was at Surat.

Perhaps the English might not have had this trouble in obtaining free trade in Bengal if their higher authorities

<sup>75</sup> *H.F.R.*, vol. IV, pp. 5-6.

<sup>76</sup> *H.F.R.*, vol. IV, Part II, p. 42.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

in Surat and Madras had taken more interest in renewing the old *farmān* of *Shājahān*. The Bengal factors repeatedly requested them to send someone to the emperor to settle the matter of customs. According to the practice of Mughal times, every charter issued by the emperor had to be renewed by his successor, otherwise it would lose its validity. The renewal followed on the payment of the customary presents of congratulation to the new emperor. Possibly the practice was not known to the English, but in any case it seemed that the idea of sending a mission to the king directly did not appeal to them, despite the efforts of the Bengal factors.

Throughout the year 1674 difficulties with the Mughal officials arose or persisted at Patna, Kasimbazar, Dacca and Hugli. At Patna Saif *Khān*, the new *dīwān*, being unaware of the exemptions that had been granted to the English and Dutch trade, wrote privately to the emperor that they carried on extensive trade but paid no customs. In reply he was ordered to inquire whether the Mughal emperor was being wronged, whereupon he called on both parties either to prove that they paid customs at Hugli or to pay them in Patna in future. In the event, the English obtained a receipt with some difficulty from the governor of Hugli for the annual payment of Rs. 3,000 that they had made for many years past.<sup>78</sup> This eased the situation, but did not wholly remove the trouble caused by the emperor's order. *Dastaks* for the movement of the saltpetre consignment to Hugli were only granted by the new Patna *dīwān* on an undertaking to obtain within four months a *parwāna* from the *nawāb Shāistā Khān* at Dacca showing that the customs on it had been paid.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>78</sup> *H.F.R.*, vol. IV, Part I, pp. 91-2, 100.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, Part II, pp. 12-14.



Meanwhile, the Court of Directors suspected that the trade in the Coast of Coromandel and in the Bay of Bengal was carried on inefficiently, since they had little information about it. The Coast and Bay trade was carried on through agents who were dependent on Madras. The Court of Committees found that the value of exports from Bengal had risen from £34,000 in 1668 to £85,000 in 1675. The Committees thought of the Bay trade as the most lucrative trade of the Company and they suspected that if the company's servants did not take so much of the business in their own hands as private traders, the volume of exports could be increased still further. Therefore, to check the private trade and to increase the volume of trade, the Committees sent Major William Puckle to the Coast and Bay. Puckle was found to be a weak man. So the Court of Directors ordered Streynsham Master, who was found to be capable of handling the matter, to proceed at once to Masulipatam.

Streynsham Master arrived at Hugli in 1675 and found that Malik Zīndī, now deputising for his father, Malik Qāsim, tried to molest the English as far as possible. Stopping their boats and seizing their goods was his daily routine.<sup>80</sup> So the Council, in view of all circumstances, decided on trying to remove "the difference" by a present. But on 30th November 1675, the *faujdār* had imprisoned the factory *wakīl* in an attempt to extort payment of the usual present of Rs. 3,000 before the fixed date 25th December.<sup>81</sup> The *faujdār* said that it was the *nawāb*'s order. Mr Reade, who was in charge of the Hugli factory, borrowed Rs. 4,000, out of which he paid Rs. 3,000 on 2nd December.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>80</sup> *The Diaries of Streynsham Master*, vol. II, pp. 35-43.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65, *H.F.R.*, vol. I, p. 19.

<sup>82</sup> *H.F.R.*, vol. I, Part II, p. I.

Streynsham Master tried to raise the matter with the Emperor through a *wakīl* at the end of 1675. But the *wakīl* died on his way to the court and this "dasht all the business."<sup>83</sup> However on 6th December, 1676, news arrived from the factory at Dacca that the *nawāb* had received orders from the Emperor to levy customs at 2% on all the Company's goods and that orders accordingly were being prepared for dispatch to Hugli and Balasore. The two copies were received by the Dacca factory and forwarded on 10th December.<sup>84</sup>

On 3rd February 1677, the Fort Council discussed the position in Bengal arising from the new demand for payment of customs and the stoppage of goods that had resulted from it. They decided that the only way to protect themselves was to procure a new *farmān* from the emperor, confirming the privileges the Company had customarily enjoyed in Bengal since *Shujā*'s time.

Meanwhile, trouble with the *faujdār* at Hugli continued. On 2nd January, 1677, Malik Zindī accepted Reade's offer to pay Rs. 500 for a temporary permit by which the factory goods would pass, but on the 7th January goods from Kasimbazar were stopped by the harbourmaster in spite of this agreement.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, he demanded Rs. 1,900 and imprisoned the factory's banian until the 15th.<sup>86</sup> However, on 1st May 1677 news arrived from Dacca that the *nawāb* had promised to permit the company's free trade as before.<sup>87</sup>

On 5th May orders were received from Dacca to

<sup>83</sup> *The Diaries of Streynsham Master*, vol. I, pp. 491-2.

<sup>84</sup> *H.F.R.*, vol. I, Part II, p. 1., *The Diaries of Streynsham Master*, vol. II, p. 77.

<sup>85</sup> *H.F.R.*, vol. I, Part II, p. 1.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-8.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

suspend the demands for customs pending the pleasure of Aurangzib being made known.<sup>88</sup> But on 6th May, Malik Zindi demanded from Reade Rs. 2,300 for customs and threatened that no fire, water, provisions or servants would be allowed to reach the English till payment was made. On an application to the *nawāb* at Dacca, he agreed to send a commissioner to inquire into Malik Zindi's conduct.<sup>89</sup> A copy of his *parwāna* was received from Dacca at this time. But the expectations of the English for an easier relationship with the local government was ruined when *Shāistā Khān* was recalled in 1677 by the emperor.

#### *Fidai Khan and the East India Company*

When *Shāistā Khān* left Bengal in 1677 both the new *nawāb* *Fidāi Khān* and the imperial *dīwān* *Hajī Safī Khān* disregarded *Shāistā Khān*'s order granting free trade to the English in Bengal. On 8th June 1678, Hervey, one of the factors, went to Dacca with a present of an Arabian horse, some fine cloth, lace, Persian carpets and looking glasses to visit the new *nawāb* *Fidāi Khān*. In April, when the horse was presented to the *nawāb*, he gave the company's representatives the customary dresses of honour but refused the grant of his *parwāna* for free trade. The *nawāb* told them that as they had failed to produce a *farmān* from the emperor in support of their claim, he believed they had none.<sup>90</sup>

On 30th April 1678, news arrived from Dacca that an order had been given by *Fidāi Khān*, "for our *phir-wāna*, writing being given him by our people there, that

<sup>88</sup> *H.F.R.*, vol. I, pp. 12-13.

<sup>89</sup> *H.F.R.*, vol. I, Part II, p. 13.

<sup>90</sup> *H.F.R.*, vol. I, Part I, pp. 45-48.

if in seven months we procured not the King's *phirwāna* for our free trade that then we would submit to pay custom".<sup>91</sup> After much consideration the Bengal factors, on 27th May 1678, wrote two letters, one to the *nawāb* and the other to his *dīwān* at Dacca. They wrote to the *nawāb* that by favour of *Shāh Shujā*'s *nishān* and Mir Jumla's and *Shāistā Khān*'s *parwāna* the English carried on their trade in Bengal without paying any customs. They further added that the emperor's *farmān* had never been kept in Bengal but at Surat, and it was not possible to produce the *farmān* within a few days as it would take time to bring it from Surat. So if the *nawāb* *Fidāi Khān* did not give the English his *parwāna* for free trade they would neither buy nor sell any goods in Bengal.<sup>92</sup>

But the letters failed to obtain a *parwāna*, as *Fidāi Khān* died on 24th May 1678, and on 25th *Hajī Safī Khān*, the imperial *dīwān*, took over the government pending *Aurangzib*'s orders. The Bengal factors showed him several papers, including *Shāh Shujā*'s *nishān*, in support of their claim. *Safī Khān* accordingly sent the documents to the emperor.<sup>93</sup>

The Bay Council had already stopped their investment in the Dacca and Kasimbazar factories. But soon after *Fidāi Khān*'s death the Council asked *Hervey*, their provisional chief at Dacca, to seek a *parwāna* for free trade from the *dīwān* *Hajī Safī Khān*. The *dīwān* agreed to grant a *parwāna* provided that the English would give a written undertaking to pay customs if they failed to procure a royal *farmān* and would give an account of all merchandise on each boat. *Hervey* obtained the *parwāna*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 74-75, *H.F.R.*, vol. VII, p. 93.

at a cost of Rs. 825.<sup>94</sup> The *diwān* also wrote to the emperor on behalf of the English.

*Prince Azam and The East India Company*

Meanwhile, Prince Ā'zam succeeded Fidāi Khān and the English went to visit him with the customary presents. The prince ordered that a *nishān* be given to the English for free trade, but Hajī Safī Khān objected on the ground that he had already written to the emperor about it and he himself had given a *parwāna* to the English to carry on their trade.<sup>95</sup> He asked the prince to wait for the emperor's answer and the prince consequently postponed giving the *nishān*. However, on 7th September answer came from the emperor that the English had to pay customs at 2 per cent at Surat and a yearly tribute of Rs. 3,000 at Hugli. When the draft of the *parwāna* was being prepared the English requested the *diwān* to insert a clause in the *parwāna* exempting them from the customs which they had to pay on the freight of hired boats.<sup>96</sup> Hajī Safī Khān refused to do so. He said that it had become a custom and he could not alter it. The *parwāna* was approved by the *diwān*, who sent it to Prince Ā'zam to be signed.<sup>97</sup> At last, Matthias Vincent, the chief of the Bay Council, who succeeded Walter Clavell in 1677, received the desired *nishān*, which cost Rs. 21,000. Obstructions to the Company's business were thus temporarily removed. When Vincent wrote to Charnock, who had already sent a *wakil* to the emperor's court, that there was no need to procure a

<sup>94</sup> *H.F.R.*, vol. VII, pp. 97-98.

<sup>95</sup> *H.F.R.*, vol. I, Part I, pp. 73-74.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

*farmān* from the emperor, Charnock replied that a *nishān* or a *parwāna* was valid only as long as the prince or *sūbadār* received valuable presents, "there being roome enough left in them [ the papers ] to construe them as their interest inclines.....".<sup>98</sup> Meanwhile the Company's *wakīl* at Delhi reported to Charnock that Inayat *Khān*, the acting *wāzīr*, wanted Rs, 37,000 for the *farmān*. Charnock asked him to wait until the order of the Bay Council arrived. However, no further trouble over the payment of customs appears to have arisen during the rest of 1678.

The re-imposition of the *Jīziya* by Aurangzib in 1679 raised the whole question of customs duties paid by foreigners in the empire. So it was decided by the Bay Council to send to the *wāzīr* Inayat *Khān* of the central government a lump sum of money to secure a *farmān* from the emperor Aurangzib and Rs, 30,000 had been remitted from Kasimbazar to Charnock for that purpose.<sup>99</sup> At last a *farmān* was procured at a cost of over Rs. 50,000 and reached Hugli in July 1680. It was addressed to the present and future governors at Surat and required the English there in future to pay customs at the rate of  $3\frac{1}{2}\%$  instead of  $2\%$ , as previously paid from 1667, the extra  $1\frac{1}{2}\%$  being in lieu of *Jīziya* or poll tax, as the merchants were not Muslims. The *farmān* bore the emperor's seal, and it was accompanied by three *ḥasbul-ḥukums* from the *wāzīr* Asad *Khān*, addressed to the three governments of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa requiring compliance with its terms.<sup>100</sup>

The terms of the *farmān* were so ambiguous that its purport was doubtful. "It is agreed of the English

<sup>98</sup> *H.F.R.*, vol. VII, p. 129.

<sup>99</sup> *H.F.R.*, vol. II, p. 20., *H.F.R.*, vol. V, Part I, p. 35.

<sup>100</sup> *H.F.R.*, vol. V, p. 66.

nation besides their usual custom of two per cent, for their goods, more one and a half per cent Jiziyah or poll money, shall be taken. Wherefore it is commanded that in the said place, from the first day of Shawwal in the twenty third of our reign, of the said people three and a half per cent of all their goods on account of custom or poll money be taken for the future. And at all other places upon this account let no one molest them for custom *rāh-dari*,<sup>101</sup> *Peshkash*,<sup>102</sup> *farmaish*<sup>103</sup> and other matters by the emperor's court forbidden nor make any demand in these particulars."<sup>104</sup> According to Wilson this document illustrates "the difficulties and dangers which arise from uncertain punctuation. Read as above with a full stop after 'future' it would appear that Aurangzib demanded three and a half per cent on account of custom and poll tax only from the English at Surat, and that in all other places their trade was to be absolutely free. This was the English punctuation, but the Indian officials did not stand upon points. If the full stop be removed and placed after 'and at all other places', the sense is altered, at Surat and at all other places a tax of three and a half per cent is to be levied on the English. This is how the Indian officials understood the matter."<sup>105</sup> But we can agree with J. N. Sarkar who says that "the English interpretation of Aurangzib's *farmān* of 1680 was equally wrong. Payment of duty on the goods landed at Surat could by no exercise of ingenuity exempt from duty a different cargo that had come

<sup>101</sup>From the Persian word *rāh-dār*, road keeper. It means transit duty.

<sup>102</sup>tribute.

<sup>103</sup>Commission for goods.

<sup>104</sup>C.R. Wilson, *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*. vol. I, p. 78.

<sup>105</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

from Home or China not through Surat but directly to Bengal and which therefore could not have paid any duty at Surat. The English traders in Bengal had no reason to claim exemption from a law of the land, which merchants of all other nations had to obey."<sup>106</sup>

However *Shāistā Khān*, who came for a second time as the *Sūbadār* of Bengal, granted a *parwāna* which followed the English interpretation of the *farmān*. There was no interference with the Company's trade in 1680.

But a dispute started again in 1681, when Vincent gave passes to Indian merchants for goods which they had bought from the Company and for goods sent by the Company's servants in the course of their private trade. Rai Balchand, the *faujdār* of Murshidabad, stopped several boats which were carrying goods under such passes and informed the *nawāb*, who ordered that customs should be paid in such cases.<sup>107</sup> Hajī Safī *Khān* on the other hand threatened to put a general stop to the Company's business unless an undertaking was given by them to obtain a fresh *farmān*, clearly freeing the English in Bengal from payment of customs.

At this critical moment another dispute arose at Malda. The Company, which had noticed earlier that varieties of coarse goods were to be procured cheaply at Malda, opened a factory there in 1681, and named it Englezabad.<sup>108</sup> The English built their factory outside the jurisdiction of Malda town in order to avoid a small purchase charge of about two annas on a piece of cloth. Jāmshīr Beg, the *faujdār*, lodged an objection to establishing a factory outside the town. He called all the Company's brokers and weavers at Malda and compelled

<sup>106</sup>J. N. Sarkar, *History of Aurangzib*, vol. V, p. 322.

<sup>107</sup>*K. F. R.*, vol. II, pp. 2, 8, 16.

<sup>108</sup>*M. F. R.*, vol. I, Part II, p. 23.



them to give written undertakings that they would not have any business transactions with the English unless they settled their factory inside the town.<sup>109</sup> On 31st August 1681 a letter came from Rai Balchand ordering the factors to leave Englezabad and go to Malda where they could buy and sell their goods. However, Nedham, one of the factors, managed by presenting Rs. 500 to Jāmshīr Beg to obtain permission to cure<sup>110</sup> or bleach the cloth at the new factory. But on 19th December 1681, Balchand sent a horseman who forced the English to go back to Malda.<sup>111</sup> Nedham at last decided to visit Balchand with Jāmshīr Beg. Vincent blamed Hervey, another factor, for not obtaining orders from the *nawāb* to prevent interference with the Englezabad factory. Hervey answered that the Company had ordered a factory to be built in Malda whereas it has been built outside that place.<sup>112</sup>

In April 1682 the English came to know that Haji Safi Khān had received orders from the emperor, who asked the Company in Bengal to pay  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent customs on all goods exported or imported.<sup>113</sup> At this time Rai Balchand was appointed as customs-superintendent at Hugli. His assistant Parameswardas, according to the *dīwān*'s order, prohibited all trade with the Hugli factory. Vincent, finding no other way, sent the *wakīl* of Hugli to assist the *wakīl* at Delhi. He instructed the Hugli *wakīl* that they should try to get the Company's freedom of

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>110</sup> Generally the approved cloth was sent for washing to the set of washers who cured it or bleached it to remove its original colour. The English used the technical term "curing" for bleaching.

<sup>111</sup> *M. F. R.*, vol. I, Part II, pp. 42-44.

<sup>112</sup> *N. F. R.*, vol. III, p. 3.

<sup>113</sup> *D.F.R.*, vol., I, p. 32.

trade restored, or if that was not possible, to have an annual payment of Rs. 3,000 at Hugli substituted for payment of customs.<sup>114</sup>

Meanwhile, trouble arose at Dacca concerning mint duty. Generally treasure was sent in the form of bullion from England to be coined in the Indian mints and then distributed among the various settlements according to the needs of the year. This question of coinage was a bone of contention between the *nawāb* and the English. From February 1682 Hajī Safī Khān imposed a charge of 5 per cent as a mint duty for the non-Muslims and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent for the Muslims.<sup>115</sup> In consequence the mint superintendent at Dacca demanded the extra duty. It has been seen how the *nawāb* to whom the English complained, went against the new charge.<sup>116</sup> But the question of the new mint duty remained unanswered by the *dīwān*.

During this period misrule was rampant among the sergants of the Company itself. They traded on their own account, unmindful of the interests of their employers. Sometimes they had dealings with interlopers like the great Pitt. When news of this disorder reached England the Court of Directors decided to constitute the agency at Hugli as a distinct factory separate from Fort St. George, which had irregularly exercised its control over the Bengal factors. The Court of Directors appointed in 1681 William Hedges, a member of their committees, with special powers to be agent and governor of their affairs in the Bay of Bengal and the factories subordinate to it. He was also directed to act against the interlopers. Hedges was resolutely bent on faithfully

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42, *H.F.R.*, vol. VI, p. 30.

<sup>115</sup> *D.F.R.*, vol. I, p. 32.

<sup>116</sup> See *Supra*.

carrying out the terms of his commission to suppress the interlopers, to put down private trade, and moreover to establish a legal right to the trade of Bengal.

After his arrival in Hugli in 1682 Hedges decided to visit the *nawāb Shāistā Khān* at Dacca, to obtain remission of the tax of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.<sup>117</sup> The agent with all his retinue started, but Parmeswardas, contrary to his promise, privately sent armed boats to stop the English boat from sailing.<sup>118</sup> He desired a bribe, in return for which he would release the English boat, and at last he received Rs.2,000. Thus Hedges visited *Shāista Khān* and managed to get *parwānas* from the *nawāb* and *Haji Safi Khān* for free trade for seven months. Within seven months Hedges had to procure a *farmān* from the emperor.<sup>119</sup> Hedges obtained three other *parwānas* from *Shāista Khān*. The first *parwāna* ordered that Parameswardas should be dismissed, that the money forced from them should be restored, and that their goods should pass free without payment of customs. The next was addressed to *Rai Balchand* and the *faujdār* of Hugli, ordering them to seize Pitt and Captain Dornell, two interlopers. The third *parwāna* was for relief of grievances at Malda. Hedges also obtained a *parwāna* relating to mint duty from the *diwān* *Haji Safi Khān*. According to this  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent customs were to be paid for coining either at Dacca or Rajmahal.<sup>120</sup> Thus Hedges's efforts appear to have ended in success.

W. H. Carey observes : "Previous to 1684-85 the trade of the Company in Bengal had been subject to repeated interruptions from the caprice of the viceroy and the

<sup>117</sup> *The Diary of William Hedges*, vol. I. p. 33.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

machinations of his underlings. The seat of the factory was at Hooghly, then the port of Bengal which was governed by a Mahomedan officer called Fouzdar, who had a large body of troops under his command and possessed supreme authority in the place. The Company's establishment was therefore completely at his mercy and their officers had no means of resisting exactions or resenting insult".<sup>121</sup> But we learn from Hedges's diary that after procuring the *parwāna* in January 1683 from the *nawāb* their goods passed "as freely as ever they did formerly".<sup>122</sup> When on 11th June the seven months truce expired it was the *nawāb Shāista Khān* who wrote to the emperor on behalf of the English. By the end of July *dīwān* Sayyid Aḥmad, who meanwhile had succeeded Hajī Safī Khān, demanded 3½ per cent customs duty from the English. But *Shāista Khān* requested the *dīwān* not to levy any customs until an answer came from the emperor. Similarly when the imperial *dīwān* at Patna in July proposed that customs should be levied on saltpetre, Buzurg Umaid Khān, *Shāista Khān*'s son, refused to allow it, saying that his father had written in favour of the English to the emperor and it was better to wait for the emperor's answer.<sup>123</sup> Even in November the Company's ship *Kent* left Hugli with saltpetre for the Fort and the *Hare* left with sugar for Persia,<sup>124</sup> without bribing the customs officer. In the same year the English at Hugli contracted for goods to the value of Rs. 400,000 (£45,000).<sup>125</sup>

<sup>121</sup> W. H. Carey, *Good Old days of Hon'ble John Company*, vol. I., p. 35.

<sup>122</sup> *The Diary of William Hedges*, vol. I, p. 62.

<sup>123</sup> *F.P.R.*, vol. I, pp. 9, 21, 25, *H.F.R.*, vol. IX, p. 78, 115.

<sup>124</sup> *H.F.R.*, vol. IX, pp. 85-86, *The Diary of William Hedges*, vol. I, p. 140.

<sup>125</sup> *H.F.R.*, vol. X. p. 11.

Though Hedges gave a written undertaking that the English would pay customs duty if they failed to procure a *farmān* from the emperor, he himself objected against paying customs. He thought that "If we pay  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent one yeare, we shall pay 5 the next, to excuse opening, pricing, weighing and measuring our goods : and by degrees these people's exactions will grow to be insufferable. Ye duty of custome (computing the trade which will and may easily be carryed on yearly in Bengall) I conclude, will be taken on £600,000 stock. The custome of that money, inwards at  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent and custome on its returnes home at  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent more is 7 per cent, which will amount to £42,000 per annum for ye one halfe of which charge I will venture my life and fortune to take off the payment of custome for ever and to agree with this King upon such capitulations as shall be not only a vast advantage but a perpetuall honour to our English Nation".<sup>126</sup>

Hedges was constantly thinking of future reforms of the English trade in Bengal and he often threw out suggestions to that end. He heard that the Dutch intended "to settle themselves in a fortification in some most commodious part of the mouth of the Hugli and then they would oblige the natives and government of Bengal to interdict and forbid their trade with all manner of European Christians or else were resolved to run the hazard of doing it themselves".<sup>127</sup> Hedge's reflection in this connection is as follows : "And then adieu to the Bay of Bengal (the best flower in the Company's garden), and all India besides, if they please to command it". "The Company's affairs will never be better, but always grow

<sup>126</sup> *The Diary of William Hedges*, vol. I, p. 139.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

worse and with continual patching, till they resolve to quarrel with these people, and build a Fort on the Island Sagar at the mouth of this river, and run the hazard of losing one yeare's trade in the Bay...If this be not speedily taken in hand by us...it will soon be done by the Dutch".<sup>128</sup>

However, the order for Hedge's dismissal came in 1684. The reason for this was that he opened a letter which was addressed by John Beard, acting chief at Hugli, to Sir Josiah Child, the governor of the Company. The Bengal factories again became subordinate to the Madras factory. Gyfford, the President at Madras factory, came to Bengal. He found that Sayyid Aḥmad, the *dīwān*, demanded fresh security for the payment of customs. Gulab Rai, a Dacca merchant, gave security for the Company in 1683, and he paid part of the customs duty which was due on behalf of the English. But in 1684 he became insolvent.<sup>129</sup> Pownsett, the chief of Dacca, gave the *dīwān* Sayyid Aḥmad an undertaking to pay  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent customs according to the entries of goods. Though Gyfford was annoyed by it, he accepted it. However, no definite order had come from the emperor for the Company to be freed from the  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent customs duty. On the other hand, when the *dīwān* found that the interlopers, whom he took as a new Company, were willing to pay  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent duty,<sup>130</sup> he demanded the same duty from the English. Finally at the end of 1684 Gyfford and the Bay Council decided to protect themselves by force. So as a first step they thought it necessary to establish a fortified settlement at

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118, 133-34.

<sup>129</sup> *H.F.R.*, vol. IX, pp. 122-123.

<sup>130</sup> *H.F.R.*, vol. X, pp. 81, 87, 91. *K.F.R.*, vol. III, p. 115.

Hugli. They wrote to the Home authorities about their decision. This led to no immediate action but gave rise to a good deal of discussion in England.

The idea of having a fortified settlement in Bengal encouraged the Court of Directors and they deliberated over the scheme. But before taking any decision, the Court of Directors wrote two letters from London, one to the *nawāb* of Dacca and the other to the emperor Aurangzib, explaining their position in Bengal. They wrote to the *Nawāb* that under several *farmāns* the English had the privileges of carrying trade in Bengal. But during the last few years, according to the *nawāb's* instructions, his officers had stopped the English goods from going on board, besieged the English factories from time to time and extorted bribes from the English as often as they pleased. These were such oppressions as the English could no longer bear.<sup>181</sup> The second letter addressed to the emperor starts thus :

“To

The High and Mighty Prince “Emperor” of all India,  
Great Sir,

It is with great reluctancy that wee are forced to address ourselves to your Majestie in such a stile as wee are compelled to by the intolerable injuries and oppressions, that wee have sustained from ye Nabob of Dacca, your Majesty's governor of your provinces of Bengalla and Orissa. The particulars whereof will be made out to your Majesty's officers by our said general which we must intreat your Majesty to command ye payment of and that your officers may for ye future be required to forbear searching the persons of our servants journeying from Swally to Suratt which hath of late been practised with

<sup>181</sup> *Letter Book No. VIII*, p. 86.

such vigour and indecency as to search some of our servants' shirts, while ye Dutch and Danes passed free without any such affront or molestation from your Majesty's officers. This practice of your Majesty's officers upon ye persons of our servants is an indignity to our Nation...your Majesty would be pleased to order those differences and hostilities in the Bay to be so compared with our Agent of Bengall that wee may have a future security that ye like shall not be again attempted upon us."<sup>132</sup> The complaint made by the English in the two letters opened a question. It appears from the letters that they regarded *Shāista Khān* as the evil root of all their troubles. It is true that the English sometimes found that *Shāista Khān's* men disregarded his *parwāna* and extorted a road patrol charge, which was virtually an internal customs duty. But the English East India Company's merchants were wrong if they thought that they were the only victims of *Shāista Khān*. Streynsham Master himself wrote in his diary : "Nor do they ( His officers ) want ways to oppress those people of all sorts who trade whether natives or strangers".<sup>133</sup> Sometimes a local customs officer caused great trouble to the English merchants and in some cases officers seized the English boats. The grant of a *nishān* had been made to the English by Prince *Shujā'* in 1656. From that time the East India Company enjoyed the right of sending goods for export and import to different parts of the country by means of *dastaks* issued for the purpose. But taking advantage of these passes the English merchants sometimes carried the goods of other merchants under the protection of the *dastaks*. It was a standard practice

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 101-102.

<sup>133</sup> *The Diaries of Streynsham Master*, vol. II, pp. 80-81.



with the servants of the Company to smuggle goods of their own for private inland trade in India. The customs officers, being aware of the habits of the English, could not always be sure that the goods in question belonged strictly to the Company. Therefore they levied duties on such goods.

Regarding the question of the extortion of bribes, it may be said that the Company's chief at Hugli was authorised to make use of bribes at discretion to get the goods away down river.<sup>134</sup> The English were prepared to bribe but not to pay customs, presumably because this would create a precedent. In Mughal India it was customary to make presents to the officers. It is true that the way in which the *faujdārs* and their subordinates pressed the Company for presents shows that they demanded them as a matter of right. Another complaint was of "stopping the boats, seizing the factories", etc.<sup>135</sup> In 1668 the Company exported from the province goods worth £34,000; in 1675 their value rose to £150,000, which continued up to 1680. It seems that the Company's trade in and with Bengal was free from serious impediment from the local Mughal officers, otherwise this volume of trade would have been impossible. As a matter of fact the English were trading in Bengal on far more favourable terms than the Dutch, who were no longer able to cope with the situation and equally suffered from the imposition of customs. They paid annually from Rs. 30,000 to Rs. 40,000 at Hugli.

When the Court of Directors was inclined to set up a fortified factory in the mouth of the Hugli river, Job Charnock, who meanwhile had become chief at Kasim-

<sup>134</sup> *H.F.R.*, vol. IV, p. 219.

<sup>135</sup> *Letter Book No. VIII*, p. 86.

bazar and second in Council in the Bay, came into conflict with the local government in Kasimbazar. The main cause of conflict, as narrated in the Kasimbazar factory Records,<sup>136</sup> was that the native merchants and dealers employed there refused to supply cloths to Job Charnock, who underpriced the goods and paid no money to them. Generally the factors contracted with the manufacturer through the native agent or broker who worked through a host of smaller agents. These smaller agents contracted directly with the manufacturers. The brokers received some advance money from the factors to purchase the commodities wanted by the English. The system of advancing money was called *dādani*. After the arrival of the ships the merchants were called into the warehouse where they submitted a muster or sample of each variety of cloth for the council's approval. If the factors were satisfied they would fix a price for approved cloth according to its quality and would give the merchants money according to their ability to provide goods.<sup>137</sup> But a great number of silk merchants and weavers at Kasimbazar complained that Charnock's colleagues, Threder and Barker, dishonestly took a portion of the silk they brought to the warehouse. They further complained that Charnock's constant practice was to exact Rs. 2 on the hundred from the weavers for pricing their taffetas.<sup>138</sup> So they made a large claim amounting to Rs. 43,000 against Charnock and his colleagues.<sup>139</sup> The *nawāb Shāista Khān* supported the claim and summoned Charnock to appear before him.<sup>140</sup> But Charnock refused

<sup>136</sup> *K.F.R.*, vol. III, p. 70.

<sup>137</sup> *The Diaries of Streyntsham Master*, vol. I, p. 86.

<sup>138</sup> *K.F.R.*, vol. III, p. 72.

<sup>139</sup> *K.F.R.*, vol. IV, pp. 25-30.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

to do so. All attempts of the other factors to persuade *Shāista Khān* to modify his decision became fruitless. All communications with the Kasimbazar factory were cut off.<sup>141</sup>

In April, 1686, Charnock escaped to Hugli, where he received news from the Home authorities who were determined to declare war not only against the *nawāb* of Bengal but also against the emperor.<sup>142</sup> The Home authorities further wrote that "some others have propounded to us the seizing upon a town called Chittagonne in the easternmost mouth of the Ganges upon or near the coast of Rakan..."<sup>143</sup> In the meantime James II permitted retaliation for their injuries by hostilities against *Shāista Khān* and Aurangzib.<sup>144</sup>

Preparations for war were thus made on a vast scale. Armed vessels mounted with guns were obtained, several companies of infantry were raised and an entire company of regular infantry with their officers was sent for from England. A certain Nicholson was appointed Admiral.<sup>145</sup> He was instructed first to proceed to Balasore, and, having brought away the Company's agents, to continue his voyage to Chittagong. Nicholson was further directed to enter into a treaty of alliance with the *raja* of Arakan and also to come to terms with the Hindu zamaindārs in that neighbourhood.<sup>146</sup>

The English troops reached Bengal at the end of 1686. The total number of the Company's soldiers at Hugli amounted to less than four hundred.<sup>147</sup> There

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> *Letter Book No. VIII*, p. 108.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> *The Diary of William Hedges*, vol. II, p. 51.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>146</sup> *Letter Book No. VIII*, p. 210.

<sup>147</sup> *The Diary of William Hedges*, vol. II, p. 54.

is no evidence that the reaction on the Mughal side was very serious though Stewart says "the arrival of such a force in the Ganges immediately roused the suspicions and fears of *Shāista Khān*. He offered to compromise the differences with the English and to submit the whole of their dispute to arbitrators appointed on both sides".<sup>148</sup> But William Hedges wrote in his diary that *Shāista Khān* was not a man to be trifled with.<sup>149</sup> On the other hand, the *nawāb* sent three thousand foot and three thousand horse to Hugli to guard the town. Moreover, Abdul *Ghāni*, the *faujdār* of Hugli, became more and more threatening.<sup>150</sup>

Abdul *Ghāni* forbade the English to buy victuals in the market, but on 28th October three English soldiers went into the market as usual and were severely beaten and imprisoned. The news flew through the town, and this brought on the skirmish at Hugli.<sup>151</sup> No sooner had *Shāista Khān* heard of it, than he sent his officers to Patna to seize all the Company's property there and imprison their servants.<sup>152</sup> He determined to bring the English to submission by force. In consequence, Charnock with all the English left Hugli and halted at Sutanuti, 26 miles lower down the river from Hugli. Meanwhile, Baramal, a Hindu friend of the English, who had influence in the *nawāb's darbār*, tried to make peace between the English and the *nawāb*. Charnock sent his demands through him. These were that the English should have ground to build a fort on, that they

<sup>148</sup> Charles Stewart, *History of Bengal*, p. 314.

<sup>149</sup> *The Diary of William Hedges*, vol. II, p. 55.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>153</sup> *The Diary of William Hedges*, vol. II, pp. 64-65.

might have a mint there, and that they be allowed to trade customs free. The twelve articles formulating the English demands, being signed and sealed, were sent for the *nawāb's* confirmation.<sup>153</sup>

The *nawāb* after three weeks sent the articles back, without signing them. He further ordered the subordinate *faujdārs* throughout the province to drive the English out of Bengal. The English, finding no other way, burnt the imperial salt warehouses near Matiaburj, stormed the fort of Thana and, sailing to the sea, seized the island of Hijli. In may 1687 *Shāista Khān* sent Abdul *Ghāni* to Hijli, but he failed to expel the English and opened negotiations. The English, who had lost a considerable number of soldiers, were quite willing to negotiate.<sup>154</sup>

According to Charles Stewart, "at this critical period overtures of peace were made by the nawab, and on the 16th of August, a treaty was signed by which the English were permitted to return to all their factories in different parts of the province, the duty of  $3\frac{1}{2}\%$  was abrogated and they were allowed to erect magazines and to construct docks for their shipping at Oulaberea".<sup>155</sup> It is not known where Stewart got his information, but the diary of William Hedges reveals the fact that orders from Dacca came in which the emperor gave permission to the English to secure themselves at Uluberia,<sup>156</sup> carrying on their trade with the native merchants.<sup>157</sup> Hedges did not mention that the English were exempted from the  $3\frac{1}{2}\%$  customs duty. Charles Stewart further states that "in order to account for this favourable change in the

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>155</sup> Charles Stewart, *op. cit*, p. 318.

<sup>156</sup> Situated on the right bank of the Hugli river "As Uluberia had depth of water, sufficient to make Docks..."-*The Diary of William Hedges*, vol. II, p. 71.

<sup>157</sup> *The Diary of William Hedges*, vol. II, pp. 69-70.

sentiments of the *nawāb Shāista Khān*, it is requisite to state, that at the same period Admiral Nicholson's fleet was fitted out in England for the attack on Chittagong... The English cruisers, having in a short time captured a number of the Mughal vessels in Surat, the emperor became solicitatious for peace and authorised the governor of Surat to depute an envoy to Bombay, to learn on what terms it might be obtained. It was in consequence of these orders that Mr. Charnock obtained such favourable and unexpected terms".<sup>158</sup> But we have seen before that Admiral Nicholson had already arrived in Bengal at the end of 1686. These negotiations were carried on early in 1687, when there is no reference to the arrival of Admiral Nicholson with his fleet. Aurangzib was at this time intent on capturing Haidarabad and he had no time to hear of a trifling matter in a distant province like Bengal. The order he sent was a gracious permission, and there is no evidence that he sent it only on hearing of the arrival of Admiral Nicholson's fleet.

Charnock's failure, however, enraged the Court of Directors, who were still inclined to set up a fortified post in Bengal. They wrote to him : "we are peremptorily resolved never to send any of our estate again into Bengal until we know you are well settled and fortified in some strong place of our own, with an English garrison and it is for that purpose principally that we have been and are at so vast a charge in sending out so many strong ships last year and so many soldiers as we have sent this last and this present year".<sup>159</sup> A despatch to Bengal dated March 1687 again refers to the quarrel of the Mughal with Golkunda and urges the President to take this

<sup>158</sup> Charles Stewart, *op. cit.*, p. 318.

<sup>159</sup> *Letter Book No. VIII*, p. 215.

opportunity. "The Emperor of Golcondah is rich enough to pay for any assistance you gave him, either in diamonds or in pagodas".<sup>160</sup> Similarly, a letter of 28th September 1687 states "Its very true that you say you find in our letters that we desire peace a solid peace—but we tell you, you should not suffer yourselves to be feeling embarrassed or delayed by any treaty but proceed immediately for Chittagam...Chittagam is by all approved of the best place in the Easternmost mouth of the Ganges which is already fortified with some bastions and walls,... and the conquest thought easy as well as own'd by ye agent to be soe".<sup>161</sup>

Subsequently, a fresh naval force was sent from London with orders to seize Chittagong.<sup>162</sup> All the letters of the Court of Directors between 1685 to 1688 voiced the desire to seize Chittagong and to have a fortified settlement. They wrote to the Bengal factors : "We will pursue ye warr against the Mogull until we have a fortified settlement in Bengal upon as good terms as we hold Fort St. George or Bombay whatever it cost us and will be satisfied for the charge of the warr before we make any peace with them".<sup>163</sup> They further advised that if the inhabitants of Chittagong surrendered "give ye inhabitants Quarter...don't kill them...seize all that belong to the Mogull...grant ye inhabitants their Religion ...offer no violence to women and children".<sup>164</sup>

Meanwhile, the Court of Directors decided to withdraw the English factory from Surat and to concentrate the Company's trade at Bombay. Sir John Child, the

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> *Letter Book No. VIII*, p. 438.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

Chief director of all the Company's factories in India, was asked to seize the Indian ships at sea to retaliate for the injury done to the English trade in India. John Child left Surat on 5th May 1687. After his departure the governor of Surat surrounded the factory and detained the factors. John Child came in 1688 with a fleet before Swally, the landing place for Surat, and asked the Governor to remove the guard round the factory. But the Governor suddenly imprisoned the English factors more closely. John Child went back after capturing the Indian shipping on the west coast.<sup>165</sup>

Such was the position of the English in Western India. In Eastern India Charnock was waiting for further orders from the Home authorities, who were determined to capture Chittagong. To effect this determination a reinforcement of a line of battleships was despatched to Bengal in 1688 under the command of Captain Heath. Captain Heath has been described in the Factory Records as a man of "warm disposition, a peculiar type". The Court of Directors ordered him to wait at Madras, if he found Charnock had made peace in Bengal, otherwise Heath was to sail at once against Chittagong. After Charnock's arrival in Sutanuti, he found that *Shāista Khān* had asked the English to return to Hugli, demanding large sums as compensation for the war. Charnock determined to stay at Sutanuti and sent Eyre and Bradil, the two factors to Dacca to settle the matter with the *nawāb*.<sup>166</sup> Captain Heath, in the meantime, called a council of war and communicated the Court of Directors' order to them. Heath wanted war when the others were in favour of peace. Meanwhile, Bahādūr *Khān* succeeded *Shāssta Khān*.

<sup>165</sup> *Cambridge History of India*, vol. IV, p. 309.

<sup>166</sup> *The Diary of William Hedges*, vol. II, p. 72.



*Bahādūr Khān and the English*

The English were not without hopes that the new *nawāb* would after all grant their demands, especially now that they had received such large reinforcements from England. Captain Heath understood that Bahādūr Khān, the new ruler at Dacca, intended to send an expedition against the King of Arakan, and hastily wrote off to offer his help, provided that the *nawāb* should confirm all the old privileges of the English in Bengal and immediately sent an order permitting the building of a fortified place. Otherwise, the English would leave the country.<sup>167</sup> The letter seems rather in the nature of an ultimatum than a genuine offer of help on friendly terms. The two Englishmen changed the situation, for on their request Bahādūr Khān sent a message to the emperor asking him to grant favourable terms to the English. The emperor sent Malik BarKhwurdār to settle the matters at Hugli. Captain Heath ordered the English to follow him in search of a secure centre for their trade, for he had no patience to wait for Malik BarKhwurdār. Heath, with Charnock and his men came to Balasore and attacked the town.<sup>168</sup> Meanwhile, a letter from Eyre and Bradil arrived. They wrote that Bahādūr Khān would grant the requests of the English if Charnock would write and confirm the offers made in October to help Bahādūr Khān against the Arakan King. Heath called a council of war, where the letter was discussed. When Charnock was allowed to write to the *nawāb*, Heath decided to attack Chittagong, and set sail.<sup>169</sup> After his arrival there, he found the place strongly defended. So he tried to make the *faujdar*

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

understand that the English had come to help the Mughal against Arakan. Heath called another council which advised against attacking Chittagong. Heath was always in a hurry, and he changed his mind frequently. Without waiting for any further communication from the *faujdār* of Chittagong, he sailed away to offer his services to the King of Arakan.<sup>170</sup> Unfortunately, the King received him very coldly. Consequently, Heath determined to return to Madras.<sup>171</sup>

Thus of the vast programme of seizing Chittagong, conceived with astounding disregard of the opposing forces, not a single item was carried out. The consequence of the Company's spirited war policy was the evacuation of Bengal.

Meanwhile, from February to July in 1689, Captain Heath went tripping from port to port with the whole of the Company's establishment in Bengal. His defiant attitude towards the settlements at Madras and Bombay was surprising. However, on the whole, the consequences were less serious than might have been expected. The Emperor, who at first was much incensed against them, issued orders to extirpate the English from his dominions and to seize or destroy all their goods,<sup>172</sup> but at the end of 1689 he came to terms with them. We have no positive evidence of the reasons for his change of heart. Perhaps Aurangzib did not want to lose the revenue which he derived from the English commerce. The average annual flow of bullion brought into Bengal by the English was about £87,000. Besides this, the English power was formidable at sea. Therefore, Aurangzib wrote to the new *nawāb* Ibrāhim Khān, who meantime came to Bengal: "It has

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>172</sup> *Cambridge History of India*, vol. IV, p. 308.

been the good fortune of the English to repent them of their irregular past proceedings...they petitioned for their lives and a pardon for their faults, which have accordingly been granted. Therefore, upon receipt of my order you must not create any further trouble but let them trade as formerly, and this order I expect you to see strictly observed".<sup>173</sup>

### *Ibrāhim Khān and the Company*

According to Aurangzib's order, Ibrāhim Khān wrote a letter to the Madras factors on 2nd July, inviting the English to return to Bengal. He counselled the Madras authorities to re-establish the Bengal factory. At last, in February 1690, peace was finally concluded between the Mughal government and the English on the west coast.<sup>174</sup> Aurangzib agreed to grant a new *farmān* in 1690, on condition that the Company paid all the dues of the Indian merchants and gave compensation for the losses inflicted on the empire. On the fulfilment of these terms, the old permits for trade on the west coast and in Bengal were restored. Accordingly, Ibrāhim Khān issued a *farmān* in February 1691, granting the Company exemption from the payment of custom duties in Bengal in return for Rs. 3,000 a year.<sup>175</sup> In other words, the status quo of 1651 was re-established. The Company wrote to the Directors on 15th May 1691 : "We received from Dacca the copy of the King's Hoosbul hookum for being freed from custome only paying the yearly piscash of Rs. 3,000 which is an unexpected favour and

<sup>173</sup>J. N. Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

<sup>174</sup>*D.F.R.*, vol. I, Part II, pp. 21-22.

<sup>175</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 17.

of what considerable advantage to that Rt. Hon. Com. no person can be insensible".<sup>176</sup>

In 1696, while peace was ultimately concluded with the English in Bengal, Sova Singh, a *zamindār* of Chandra-kona in Midnapore, rebelled. The outbreak of rebellion gave the English the very opportunity for which they had so long waited. With the help of the Afghan leader Rahim *Khān*, Sova Singh captured Burdwan. The rebel force rapidly increased in numbers and marched upon Hugli.<sup>177</sup> But the *nawāb* Ibrāhim *Khān* remained inactive. The European settlements in Bengal, in order to defend themselves, asked the *nawāb*'s permission to fortify their factories, which the *nawāb* accorded. Towards the end of the year the English set to work to build walls and bastions round their factory. The English East India Company, who were longing for a fortified settlement and could not secure it by declaring war in 1686-88, found the opportunity to fortify Calcutta. So did the Dutch and the French in Chinsura and in Chandernagore respectively. Thus, Fort William in Calcutta, Fort Orleans in Chandernagore and Fort Gustavus in Chinsura were established.

However, the news of the rebellion led Aurangzib to dismiss the *nawāb* Ibrāhim *Khān* and replace him by his grandson 'Azim-ush-Shān. 'Azim-ush-Shān succeeded in destroying the strongholds of the rebels and reasserting the imperial power in 1697.<sup>178</sup>

#### *'Azim-ush-Shān and the Company*

'Azim-ush-Shān was a lazy and covetous person. He was ready to concede anything if he received money. Taking

<sup>176</sup>*C.F.R.*, vol. I, p. 63.

<sup>177</sup>See *Supra*, p. 45.

<sup>178</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 49.

advantage of this opportunity, the English applied to the prince for the *zamindāri* rights of the three villages, Govindapur, Sutanuti and Kalikata. On 31st October 1698, the English wrote to the Home authorities that "the prince having given us the three towns adjacent to our settlement vizt, De Culcutta, Chuttanuttee and Gobinapore or more properly may be said the Jimmidarship of the said townes, paying the same rent to the King as the Jimmidars successively have done and at the same time ordering the Jimmidar of the said towns to make over their right and title to the English upon their paying to the Jimmidar one thousand rupees for the same... but the Jimmidar being unwilling to part with their country threatening to complain to the King of the injustice of the Prince in giving away their country... Its agreed that 1,500 rupees be paid them provided they will relinquish their title to the said townes and give it under their hands in writing..."<sup>179</sup> Actually, the three villages were sold for Rs, 1,300.<sup>180</sup> Thus, in 1698 the English agencies at Patna, Rajmahal and Balasore were closed and trade concentrated at Calcutta.

The turn of the century witnessed rivalry and animosity among the Englishmen themselves in relation to the Indian trade. In 1686 King James II gave the East India Company a fresh Charter confirming all its privileges. But after the Glorious Revolution the new government was largely dependent on the Whig party. The East India Company's enemies, who were affected by the Company's importation of printed calicoes and manufactured silks, organised a vigorous campaign against the Company's monopoly. The East India Company defended itself, but the arguments of its opponents made

<sup>179</sup> *C.F.R.*, vol. III, p. 150.

<sup>180</sup> *B.M.A.M.*, No. 24039, fol. 36a.

a great impression on the public. In 1692, Parliament wanted to widen the East India Company by increasing its capital to £1,500,000 and requested King William III to grant it a fresh Charter. In October, 1693, a new grant was made. It doubled the Company's capital, restricted the amount of stock that could be held by any member, and provided that any merchant might join on payment of £5. Though this arrangement increased the number of shareholders, it did not pacify the Company's opponents.<sup>181</sup> In 1696, the opponent party applied to Parliament to obtain the exclusive right to trade to India. After two years the financial needs of King William's government brought the matter to an issue. The East India Company, therefore, understanding that the government was in urgent need of money, offered to advance £700,000 at 4 per cent interest. The Company's opponents, on the other hand, proposed to advance no less than £2,000,000 at 8 per cent interest. Consequently, their proposal fell on willing ears. An Act was passed by the Legislature in the year 1698.<sup>182</sup> It provided for a subscription of £2,000,000 as a loan to the state, which in return would grant the subscribers the exclusive right of trading to the East Indies. On 5th September, 1698, William III, in accordance with the provisions of the Act, incorporated the majority of the subscribers by a Charter as one exclusive Company trading on a joint stock under the name of the "English Company trading to the East Indies".<sup>183</sup> The old Company was now obliged to assume the title "London Company".

The English Company sent in 1698 Sir William Norris as ambassador to the emperor Aurangzib. But Norris

<sup>181</sup> W. W. Hunter, *A History of British India*, vol. II, pp. 306-10

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 319.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 320, Bruce, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

was not successful in obtaining any special advantages for his employers. They fixed upon Hugli as the headquarters of their settlement in Bengal. Sir Edward Littleton was appointed as an agent of the new Company. The new governor had been a factor in the service of the old company from 1671 to 25th January 1682.<sup>184</sup>

In 1700, the London Company's factories in Bengal were placed under the separate control of a President and council, established in the new fortified settlement which was named Fort William. In the same year Murshid Qulī Khān was appointed as *dīwān* of Bengal.

#### *Murshid Qulī Khān and the Company*

So much confusion and disorder arose as a result of the competition of the two companies that Aurangzib issued a *farmān* to prohibit all European trade in India.<sup>185</sup> Naturally, Murshid Quli acted vigorously. In 1702, the old Company's factors were seized in Patna and Rajmahal. The new company lost heavily as well. This situation continued for about three months till the *sūbadār* intervened between the Company and the *dīwān*, but the *dīwān* still wanted to execute the King's *farmān*. The emperor, however, issued orders at the end of 1702 to remove the embargo upon trade. Again, we have no evidence of his motives. Murshid Quli now offered the English freedom of trade as before. The offer was not unconditional, for it was coupled with a demand for a considerable amount of money from the European traders.

While the English traders in Bengal were facing these troubles, their masters at home were planning to unite the two companies. Fortunately for them, the two

<sup>184</sup>Bruce, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

<sup>185</sup>Wheeler, *Madras in Olden Times*, vol. I, p. 386.

companies, by the "Charter of Union" dated 22nd July, 1702, were amalgamated in the "United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies".<sup>186</sup> On 13th March, 1704, they agreed to use their own seal on the *dastaks*, a practical application of the right they inherited from their predecessors. The United Company now turned their attention to securing a *sanad* from Murshid Qulī Khān.

Subsequently, the Joint Company *Wakīl* Rajaram went to meet the *dīwān* at Burdwan. Rajaram was given the following instructions :—"Our grant from the Mogull is for three thousand rupees per annum and no more and as there is but one factory and one company we expect to pay no more". On 26th September, Rajaram informed the English that the Dutch had already presented gifts to the *nawāb* and the *dīwān*, who were pleased with them.<sup>187</sup> The English wanted to know from Rajaram the value of their presents so that they could send the *nawāb* and the *dīwān* gifts of equal or greater value. In reply, the English came to know that the money which was demanded by the *nawāb* totalled Rs. 30,000. The *wakīl* also informed them that Murshid Qulī did not engage in private trade but he demanded the money in order to increase the imperial treasury.<sup>188</sup> The Company asked the *wakīl* to persuade him to decrease the demand to Rs. 15,000 and to insert Patna in the *parwāna*. But the *wakīl* failed to do this.

Fresh negotiations were started again. The *dīwān's mutṣuddī*<sup>189</sup> told Rajaram that if the English would offer

<sup>186</sup> Bruce, *op. cit.*, pp. 486-89.

<sup>187</sup> Abdul Karim, *Murshid Qulī Khān and His Times*, p. 112.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> The officer who keeps accounts and transacts the public business on the part of the commandant—*Hobson Jobson*, p. 585.



Rs. 20,000 he would renew the *parwāna* of Kifāyat Khān, the late *dīwān*, who granted it only for Bengal and Orissa. The Company asked Rajaram to spend Rs. 25,000 and to include Bihar also. The original *parwāna* of Kifāyat Khān was sent to the *dīwān*'s camp. On 12th May 1705, the news came that Kifāyat Khān's *parwāna* would be renewed provided the English could procure a *farmān* for the free trade of three provinces, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. The Company again was informed by an Armenian merchant that if they paid Rs. 20,000 and accordingly resettled their factory at Kasimbazar, they could have their *sanad*.<sup>190</sup> The negotiations however were fruitless.

The Council was at last compelled to pay Rs. 30,000 to renew the *parwāna* of Kifāyat Khān. Otherwise their business would have been totally stopped. Subsequently the English obtained a *dastak* from the Prince 'Azīm-ush-Shān and the *dīwān*'s *mutṣuddī* to bring their saltpetre boat down from Patna to Hugli. The *dīwān* also ordered that they could continue free trade in Patna. A *parwāna* was granted for Bihar by the *dīwān*'s deputy.<sup>191</sup> According to Abdul Karim, Murshid Qulī Khān looked to the interest of the country's economy and thus he demanded money in granting the *sanad* and asked the English to resettle the Patna and Kasimbazar factories.<sup>192</sup>

As Messrs. Bugden and Feak set out on 13th December, 1707 for Kasimbazar to resettle the factory, the news of the death of the emperor Aurangzib arrived in Bengal.

<sup>190</sup> Abdul Karim, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

## SECTION II

## THE COMPANY'S EXPORTS FROM BENGAL

In 1651 the East India Company's trade with Bengal was concentrated on three classes of goods—saltpetre, sugar and textiles. At first the Company was slow to develop trade from Bengal in those articles. There were no fixed times for the coming of the ships and no fixity of investment, and there are no official records of the proceedings of the vessels which passed on to Bengal to secure cargoes. When on the last day of 1657 "the governor and committees of the new joint stock for India penned their first letter to Bengal, the only Englishmen in that country were a few private adventurers and the merchants who had been sent out by the syndicate promoted by Maurice Thomson".<sup>193</sup> Consequently, the general rate of profit on these voyages cannot be estimated. What is clear is that the Company's sphere of activity was considerably narrowed through financial difficulties.

*Saltpetre*

In the early seventeenth century powder making in England depended on obtaining earth from the floors of buildings that had been used for stables. Thus saltpetre as an ingredient in the manufacture of gunpowder had great importance in the European market. The East India Company secured a licence from the Crown to manufacture gunpowder. But the venture proved a total failure owing to inadequate supplies of saltpetre.<sup>194</sup> The Company's failure in making gunpowder and the high

<sup>193</sup>W. Foster, *EFI* (1655-60), p. 188.

<sup>194</sup>E. Lipson, *The Economic History of England*, vol. III, p. 358.

demand for it in Europe during the Thirty Years war led the Company to turn their eyes to the possibility of importing saltpetre from India. The Company first obtained it from various parts of India in 1626, but only in small quantities, though the Dutch were already shipping it in large quantities as ballast. However, in 1628 President Thomas Kerridge at Surat procured a large quantity of saltpetre from Ahmadabad and sent it to ballast the ships. He promised to send a like quantity on every ship.<sup>195</sup> After 1635 the private manufacture of gunpowder was prohibited in England. The government declared it a royal monopoly. The East India Company undertook to sell all saltpetre from the Indies to the King.<sup>196</sup> Thus the country was trying to explore new markets in India for the supply of this article. In 1639 they found easy access to Bihar saltpetre from Patna. This saltpetre was considered to be the best for gunpowder. One year later civil war started in England and this increased, the demand for gunpowder, and consequently for saltpetre. When in 1651 the English found a further source of saltpetre in Hugli, the sources in Agra, Ahmadabad, Gujarat, and the coromandel coast became of less importance. The reason is to be found in the low prices prevailing in Bengal. The cost at patna was only Re. 1 per maund, though customs and freight raised the price at Hugli to Rs. 1.4 as.<sup>197</sup> It is difficult to furnish the basis of an exact comparison between the costs in different centres of production, since figures in the records are scanty. But occasional references in the Factory Records suggest that the cost of a maund of 74 lbs. at Patna was about the same as that for a maund of 37 lbs.

<sup>195</sup>R.O.C., vol. II, Letter No. 1192 ; vol. 12, Letter No. 1264.

<sup>196</sup>K. N. Chaudhuri, *op. cit* , p. 228.

<sup>197</sup>Bal Krishna, *Commercial Relation between India and England*, p. 101.

at Ahmadabad.<sup>198</sup> The cheap water transport down the Ganges enabled cargoes of saltpetre to be sent from North Bihar to Hugli for loading in ships bound for Europe.<sup>199</sup> It was clear therefore that any trade in Indian saltpetre could best be driven by way of Bengal, and the growing need for saltpetre in England made it increasingly important. In 1653 the East India Company ordered 200 tons of saltpetre from Patna. The Madras factors wrote in 1656 to the Home authorities that the price of coarse saltpetre in Bengal was more than double that of the refined sort in 1655, owing to the competition of private English merchants who used it as ballast for their ships. However, in 1659 an order came from the Court of Directors to invest £5,000 annually at Patna to procure 800 tons of saltpetre at about £6 per ton.<sup>200</sup> The Company had difficulty in obtaining saltpetre from Bengal in 1660, when Mir Jumla commanded them to stop the trade. In 1661 the situation became easy. Trevisa, the agent for Bengal, reported to the Madras factors that "15000 mds. of saltpetre are awaiting shipment in Bengal".<sup>201</sup> In the same year when the Home authorities found that saltpetre could be bought on the Coromandel coast at £8 or £9 a ton, they decided that their chief supplies would be obtained there in future.<sup>202</sup> In spite of this decision the Home authorities wrote to the Madras factors in 1662 that "we rely wholly for the commodity ( saltpetre ) on the Bay, to which purpose wee now earnestly desire you, to order the factors in ye Bay, that

<sup>198</sup>Fort St. George Factory Records, vol. 14, p. 10.

<sup>199</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>200</sup>Letter Book No. II, p. 284.

<sup>201</sup>Fort St. George Factory Records, vol. 14, pp. 12, 13.

<sup>202</sup>Letter Book, No. II, p. 334.

they yearly make provision ( beforehand at the best and cheapest times ) of 5 or 600 tons of saltpetre to lie ready for the ships to receive into them at their arrivall in the Bay, to be laden from thence in October".<sup>203</sup> In 1662 the Directors asked the Bengal agency to invest £4,000 on Patna saltpetre. The Company's business was much curtailed during the period 1664-67 on account of the outbreak of the second Anglo-Dutch war. Only three ships came to Bengal with small amounts of money,<sup>204</sup> viz. :

<i>Year</i>	<i>Ship</i>	<i>Destination</i>	<i>Money</i>
1664-65	American	Hugli	£2,745
1665-66	Dorcas	"	£1,236
1666-67	Royal Katherine	"	£7,500

When the Bengal factors had to struggle in these years against a chronic capital shortage in Bengal, the Directors wrote to them to buy annually from 300 to 500 tons of saltpetre at Hugli in order to keep the trade on foot and prevent the Dutch from monopolising it.<sup>205</sup> Another difficulty the factors of Bengal had faced at that time was of boats. Though they were short of funds, they procured saltpetre, and they could not send it at the proper time for want of boats. The *nawāb's* boats would exact an exorbitant freight.<sup>206</sup> A suggestion therefore came from Sir Edward Winter of Fort St. George that a part of the money in the Treasury should be applied to building and maintaining boats on the river in Bengal to bring saltpetre from Patna to Hugli.<sup>207</sup> At the end of 1668 a separate instruction of the Court of Directors to the

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 286.

<sup>204</sup> Letter Book No. III, pp. 457, 515.

<sup>205</sup> Letter Book No. II, p. 302.

<sup>206</sup> Bruce, *op. cit* , vol. II, p. 161.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*

agents and factors at Hugli ordered them to provide from 800 to 1,000 tons of saltpetre. The English however, after satisfying the needs of their government, had also exported much to France, Sweden, Hamburg, Amsterdam and Italy.<sup>208</sup> From 1669 onwards the average annual export of saltpetre from Bengal does not seem to have exceeded 1,000 tons. This applies only to times of peace. In 1675 and in 1676 the Company sold to the government of England 700 tons of saltpetre.<sup>209</sup> In January 1678, the Lord High Treasurer informed the Company that King Charles II wanted saltpetre to the value of £20,000 together with the customs duty on it, for the preparations of the navy.<sup>210</sup> Thus the Company supplied 1,000 tons of saltpetre for the defence of the Kingdom. The need for saltpetre increased in England in course of time. But the quantity imported from India, especially from Bengal, was not adequate to the demand. Therefore a bill was brought into Parliament to licence the importation of saltpetre from other places. The Company opposed this on the ground that it could supply 1,000 tons per annum. But the quantity required in times of war could hardly have been less than 2,000 tons. The Saltpetre Importation Bill was passed on 2nd April 1694.<sup>211</sup> After 1698 the new and the old English Company together supplied the nation with 800 tons of saltpetre annually. In 1702 England entered into war with France<sup>212</sup> and in the same year the two companies were united. After this union the Home authorities

<sup>208</sup>Bal Krishna, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

<sup>209</sup>*Court Minutes of the East India Company*, (1674-76), p. 166.

<sup>210</sup>*Ibid.*, (1677-78), p. VI.

<sup>211</sup>Tracts On Trade, vol. 13, B.M.816.m, 13. No.112.

<sup>212</sup>*Cambridge Modern History*, vol. IV, pp. 463-64.

wrote to the Bengal factors that saltpetre was "likely to turn to very good account in Europe because of the warr."<sup>213</sup> The Directors asked the Bengal Agency to provide as much as possible. Thus, between May 1705 to April 1706 the Company's total export of saltpetre from Bengal was 5024 mds., 12 seers, 39 chattaks ( 199 tons ) and from May 1706 to April 1707 it was 31,981 mds, 30 seers ( 1242 tons ).<sup>214</sup>

### *Sugar*

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the portuguese supplied sugar from Brazil to most parts of Europe, but the Levant Company used to supply it to England from Alexandria. When trade relations between England and India were established, Mr. Aldworth, the Company's Agent at Surat, in 1613 intended to send some white sugar of fine grain known as powder sugar for trial at home. The price of sugar was then two rupees per maund. Eventually it proved unprofitable. Though in 1632 the English heard that in Bengal sugar was of better quality and cost not more than two and a half pence "the English pound with all charges abroad", they do not appear to have taken an active part in the sugar trade of Bengal at this time. In 1636 when they found that the Dutch exported a large quantity of Bengal sugar from Masulipatam, they tried to develop a regular trade with Bengal in sugar. But the development was very slow. However, in 1651 the Bengal factors invested Rs.10,000 in obtaining sugar in Hugli.<sup>215</sup> Next year they were instructed to invest their capital

<sup>213</sup>Letter Book No. IX, p. 105.

<sup>214</sup>Bengal Journal and Ledger. vol 73, p. 73, vol. 75, pp. 17, 51, 52.

<sup>215</sup>R.C.C., vol. 22, Letter No. 2208.

half in saltpetre and half in sugar and silk in equal proportion.<sup>216</sup> But there is no evidence of the total amount of investment or of the quantity of sugar carried to Europe. The English Records only mention that "there is difference between prices in February and those in the time of shipping, i.e. in August and September".<sup>217</sup> But in 1658 the Court of Directors ordered 700 tons of sugar to be procured annually in Bengal.<sup>218</sup> In 1659 the Home authorities wrote that "we have ordered sugar, 700 tonn would be provided yearly—now we reduced it to 4 or 500 tonns".<sup>219</sup> In 1660 another order came that as there was fluctuation in the price of sugar in England and Persia, and as it would not turn to any account of profit, it was better to stop purchasing any sugar from Bengal.<sup>220</sup>

Both the English and the Dutch found that there was a ready market for Bengal sugar in Persia. But the English only maintained an irregular trade in Bengal sugar. Sometimes the Company asked for a supply of sugar and at other times they prohibited it. The reason for this irregularity may be explained thus: firstly that the English had taken more interest in Bengal textiles, which proved profitable, and secondly, that they found that the Dutch had carried so much Bengali sugar in Persia that it would not prove a profitable trade to them. Between 1680 and 1709 the Dutch sold 5,407,558 lbs. of Bengali powder sugar and 34,755 lbs. of candy<sup>221</sup> sugar in Persia and 146,117 lbs. of powder sugar and 8,405 lbs. of candy

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.* <sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>218</sup> Letter Book No. II, p. 197.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 297.

<sup>221</sup> Large crystals and more thoroughly refined sugar was known to the European merchants as candy sugar.



sugar in Surat and in Mocha.<sup>222</sup> Thus we find in the English East India Company's order lists that the factors are told to "procure best sugar if possible",<sup>223</sup> or "send some sugar to fill the ships".<sup>224</sup>

*Textiles : (a) Silk*

In the early seventeenth century Europe's need for fine silk and raw silk was met by Italy, France and Persia. The English East India Company conducted a valuable silk trade with them. It has been mentioned previously that in the early part of the seventeenth century Indian textiles were needed as barter for pepper and spices in the Archipelago. It was in this connection that the Company came to know about "Bengala silk" and its low price. In 1619 the English paid for Persian silk 7s.6d. per lb. and in the year they found that silk from Bengal could be procured at 5s. per lb. In 1620 Hughes, one of the English factors, found that raw silk brought in the cocoon from Bengal was to be had in large quantities in Patna itself.<sup>225</sup> Thus, in 1621 Hughes was asked to buy 100 mds. (25 bales<sup>226</sup>) of Bengal silk.<sup>227</sup> A factory was established at Patna by Hughes and Parker. They sent silk from Patna to Agra. But the Court of Directors wrote to the Surat factors that silk from Bengal was not suitable for the European market. The Company in India withdrew the Patna factory. After ten years another attempt was made to procure silk from Bengal. The English found in 1632 that Bengal silk could be procured at 2½s. per lb. or about a rupee. They estab-

<sup>222</sup> K. Glamann, *Dutch Asiatic Trade*, p. 161.

<sup>223</sup> Letter Book No. VII, p. 302.

<sup>224</sup> Letter Book No. VIII, p. 25.

<sup>225</sup> *P.F.R.*, vol. I, p. 16.

<sup>226</sup> bale = 143 lb.—Moreland, *From Akbar to Aurangzib*, p. 340.

<sup>227</sup> *R.O.C.*, vol. VII, Letter No. 825

lished a factory at Harihapur in Orissa in 1633 but not in Bengal proper, as the Portuguese had a strong foot-hold in the Bengal trade. But in 1634 the Portuguese were expelled from Bengal and in 1641 the English found that the price of raw silk in Persia was very high. Moreover, in Persia the silk trade was a royal monopoly and therefore the available quantity of Persian silk for foreign trade was very small.<sup>228</sup> Thus the English paid more attention to supplying silk from Bengal. Though they opened a factory in Bengal, the demand for silk in Europe was not very high. The disorders of the civil war brought fluctuations in the demand.<sup>229</sup> However, in 1655 the Directors ordered the Madras factors to secure an investment in Bengal silk.<sup>230</sup> In 1658, the Home authorities asked for 100 bales of raw silk, 14,000 pieces of long taffetas<sup>231</sup> and 9,000 pieces of short taffetas.<sup>232</sup> In the same year the English opened a factory at Kasimbazar and its chief Ion (*sic.*) Ken invested Rs. 50,000 on Kasimbazar silk. In 1659 there came another letter from the Court of Directors in appreciation of Bengal taffetas "we doe confesse that wee doe find good advance on the taffaties made at Casambazar they being bought there cheaper than in other places..."<sup>233</sup> On the other hand, in 1659 an order came concerning the quality of the raw silk supplied from Kasimbazar "the warp as well as woof would be boyled before dyeing" and the the order for raw silk was curtailed about 100 bales to 30

<sup>228</sup> K. Glamann, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

<sup>229</sup> S.A. Khan, *East India Trade in the XVIIth Century*, p. 12.

<sup>230</sup> Letter Book No. 1, p. 281.

<sup>231</sup> Bengal silk fabrics were known to the English by the term "taffeta" or "taffatie". This word was current in medieval Europe, to imply fine fabrics, usually of a silky or glossy quality.

<sup>232</sup> Letter Book No. II, p. 199.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 202.

or 40 bales.<sup>234</sup> The Directors wrote that "the taffetaies would be gummed in England and would then be as glossy as Italian silk"<sup>235</sup> Fine silk from Italy were in great demand in Europe. Consequently, prices of Italian silks were very high. The East India Company's Directors thought that if they imported cheap Bengal silk into England, it could be offered to the poorer people and the Company would gain a large profit from it. Therefore, the English Directors ordered the Bengal factors to purchase taffetas in an ungummed state, as they could receive this improvement in England in a superior manner, a successful experiment having been tried which made the Bengal silks pass in the market as Italian.<sup>236</sup> But in the same year the Court of Directors wrote to the Bengal factors that though Kasimbazar silks and taffetas were more profitable articles in their business, the charges of the factory at Kasimbazar were very high. Therefore, the factors in Bengal were asked to make a trial whether those merchants who lived at Kasimbazar could deliver the taffetas and silks to the factors at Hugli.<sup>237</sup> But the scheme was a failure and the English continued the Kasimbazar factory and concentrated on it for providing more taffetas and raw silks. From 1660 to 1664 there was no change in the orders for taffetas.<sup>238</sup> We have seen that the Company's business suffered from the outbreak of the second Anglo-Dutch war (1664-67). Moreover, the uncertain circumstances of the English in Bengal and their factories' subordination to Fort. St. George created difficulties in executing the commercial orders. The amount

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 335.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 336.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 416.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 405.

<sup>238</sup> For figures see Appendix II, Table I.

of money which was sent from Madras to Bengal was not sufficient to invest in saltpetre, silk, etc. The situation became worse in 1666 when complaints came from the Home authorities of the dearness of the Bengal goods last received. So a hint was given that unless these could be procured at more favourable rates "the Company should<sup>239</sup> discontinue any factory in Bengal." During this period the demand for raw silk was not constant. After 1668 the political situation in England became much better and the Directors ordered 2,000 pieces of taffetas (40, 50 or 60 yds. long) from Bengal and 50 bales of raw silk,<sup>240</sup> "the best and finest sort of head and Belly."<sup>241</sup>

From 1669 a definite change began to take place in the structure of the Company's Bengal trade and this ultimately altered the relative balance between the various commodities. From 1669 to 1684 there was a rapid growth in the Company's trade in Bengal.<sup>242</sup> It can be called a period of business expansion. The bullion sent to Bengal was increased from £24,000 in 1668-69 to £40,000 in 1669-70.<sup>243</sup> The factors of Bengal were directed to invest more than half of this stock on taffetas and raw silk.

Though Bengal silks did not usually compare in quality with the French and Italian silks, they had the advantage of being very much cheaper and therefore available to a larger section of the population. The main use for Bengal taffetas in Europe was for petticoats, neckcloths, cuffs,

<sup>239</sup> Letter Book No. II, p. 340.

<sup>240</sup> Letter Book No. IV, p. 305.

<sup>241</sup> Silk was wound into three qualities known as the *head*, *belly* and *foot*. The English used to get the head and belly generally in the proportion of 5 : 4. Head and belly together were called *Putta* or of short skein. The silk called *Puttany* was the superfine sort of head and belly—Bal Krishna, *op. cit.* p. 143.

<sup>242</sup> For figures see Appendix II, Table I and II.

<sup>243</sup> Letter Book No. IV, pp. 111-112.

handkerchiefs and linings. In 1672 throwsters,<sup>244</sup> weavers and dyers were sent over by the Company with great quantities of English patterns to teach Indian weavers new methods of manufacturiug goods suitable to English and European markets.<sup>245</sup> In 1673 the English East India Company's order for raw silk, which was not in great demand before 1668, multiplied almost ninefold.<sup>246</sup> In the case of taffetas which were to be provided annually from Bengal, the great leap forward in orders occurred in 1674,<sup>246\*</sup> an occurrence that marks a very real progress in the Comany's Bengal trade. In the following four seasons 1674-75, 1675-76, 1676-77 and 1677-78 the East India Company sent £65,000, £67,000, £55,000 and £100,000<sup>247</sup> respectively for investment on taffetas, silks and saltpetre. The factors in Bengal were authorised besides this to borrow £20,000 at 2s. 6d.<sup>248</sup> interest in the £, provided that amount could be invested in raw silk of the kind required by the Company and in taffetas.<sup>249</sup> The actual amount of raw silk, taffetas and white silk exported from Bengal cannot be ascertained, yet the considerable sums of money sent to Bengal during these periods afford indisputable evidence of an unprecedented activity in investments at Kasimbazar, Balasore, Dacca and Hugli. The reason for this expansion in the silk trade may be firstly that there was a change in consumer taste which stimulated the Company and secondly that the shrinkage of English exports to France led the House of

<sup>244</sup> Those who twist silk fibres into raw silk or raw silk into thread —Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, p. 2184.

<sup>245</sup> Court Minutes (1670-73), p. 227.

<sup>246</sup> See Appendix II, Table I. <sup>246\*</sup> *Ibid.*, Table I and II.

<sup>247</sup> Letter Book No. V, pp. 144-45, 218-19, 376-77, 401, 509-10, 536-37.

<sup>248</sup> 2s. 6d. were then equivalent to one rupee.

<sup>249</sup> Court Minutes (1674-76), pp. 19-21.

Commons in 1675 to recommend the prohibition of the import of French commodities unless the French reduced their impositions on English manufacturers.<sup>250</sup> In 1676 the manufacturers and merchants of England jointly proposed the election of a new Parliament to deal with the economic situation. They said that the French had wiped out the English trade in France by their heavy duties on English goods and had spoiled the English trade with Holland, Flanders and Germany by their wars. At last in 1678 an Act was passed which forbade the importation of French wine, cloths, silks, salt and paper.<sup>251</sup> In the season 1678-79 £100,000 and in 1679-80 £150,000<sup>252</sup> were sent to Bengal to provide an enormous quantity of taffetas and raw silk.<sup>253</sup> In July 1680 in their overland letter to Fort St. George and Bengal, the Directors emphasised the need for raw silk ; "Raw silk in general being a commodity that always turns us well to account and not the worse for the largeness of the quantity how great so ever it be".<sup>254</sup> On 22nd July 1681, they wrote again : "our principle designe in this express is further to enforce our former orders upon you to be alwaies buying and getting in what quantities you can of raw silk, for which you have not money we doe hereby authorize you to take up money by way of exchange and draw the bills on us or to take up at interest whatsoever shall be necessary for the carrying on that investment...".<sup>255</sup> Thereafter the expansion in the imports of raw silk and taffetas was rapid. In the four

<sup>250</sup> E. Lipson, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>252</sup> Bruce, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 425.

<sup>253</sup> See Appendix II.

<sup>254</sup> Letter Book No. VI, pp. 220-223.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 362-63.

years of 1678-81 a stock of £1,399,714 was sent to the coast and Bay against £890,182 to Surat and Bantam.<sup>256</sup> So anxious was the Company for trade in the raw silk and taffetas of Bengal that a complaint was made by Charnock on 5th September 1681, that he had not received the full stock of £80,000 which the Company had ordered to be placed at his disposal at Kasimbazar out of the sum of £150,000. He had received only £24,000 in dollars,<sup>257</sup> which were not likely to be turned into ready money in less than two months. Immediately the Bay Council resolved to send forty chests of treasure, half in silver ingots and half in rials, straight to Kasimbazar.<sup>258</sup>

In 1681 Bengal was constituted as an agency distinct from Fort St. George. William Hedges, one of the Directors, was appointed agent at Hugli and governor of the Company's settlement in Bengal. Hedges was directed that the stock of £230,000 for the season 1682-83 should be distributed as follows :<sup>259</sup>

Kasimbazar	—	£14,000
Dacca	—	£12,000
Hugli	—	£15,000
Malda	—	£15,000
Balasore	—	£32,000
Patna	—	£14,500

As Bengal was independent of Fort St. George, the Directors decided to strengthen the means of this agency. They allowed Hedges to set up a bank to the amount of

<sup>256</sup> Bal Krishna, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

<sup>257</sup> "The English name for the German thaler, a large silver coin, of varying value, current in the German states from the sixteenth century ; especially the unit of the German monetary union (1857-73) equal to 3 marks" (about 2s.11d.)—J. A. H. Murray, *A New English Dictionary*, p. 589.

<sup>258</sup> *H.F.R.*, vol. III, pp. 54-55.

<sup>259</sup> Bruce, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 468.

£200,000. The Directors calculated that remains of the stock and credit of the last year would amount to £350,000. So they decided to send for the ensuing season a stock of £600,000, principally in bullion. Thus the Court of Directors thought that with this accumulation on credit and stock, the agents in Bengal might build up a double stock which would help them to provide the goods at the proper seasons and at the cheapest rates.<sup>260</sup> At this time the English Company played an important part in the export trade in Bengal *rumals*.<sup>261</sup> In output the rumal production of the villages of Dignagar of Hugli and Radhanagar of Balasore was overwhelmingly greater and superior in quality to that of Malda and Dacca. The expansion which took place in the trade in silk rumals between 1680 and 1683 was really remarkable. The figures given in Appendix II in Table II show that the years around 1680-83 were a time of vigorous growth. It would have been truly impressive if the whole of this quantity had been imported for the home markets. It would be interesting to explore the re-export trade of the East India Company, but such enquiries must depend on further research. However, it is evident that the East India Company had found a ready market for Bengal goods both at home and abroad.

In 1684 the Home authorities wrote to the Bengal factors to procure as many pieces of taffetas and silk rumals as they could and asked for 1,630 bales of raw silk. The demand for raw silk showed a decline. This fall in demand was owing to the gradual fall in the price of raw silk.<sup>262</sup>

<sup>260</sup>Letter Book No. VII, p. 205.

<sup>261</sup>In Bengali it is the word for a Pocket handkerchief. In Company's trade it was applied to thin silk Piece-goods with handkerchief patterns.

<sup>262</sup>Letter Book No. VIII, p. 55.



Yet in the same year the Directors wrote to Bengal "Raw silk and taffaties are always most noble and staple commodities your Agency affords." The progress of the East India Company's trade in Bengal was rapid until their war with the Mughals in 1686-90 brought about the collapse of the trade for a while.<sup>263</sup> The years of depression 1686-90, had an important effect on the Company's trade. No statistics on the relative distribution of money and goods exported to Bengal can be traced from 1685 to 1690. But all kinds of silk were ordered, as is shown in the Table II of Appendix II. After 1686 the demand for raw silk showed no decline.

In England, meanwhile, the Prohibition Act excluding French imports was renewed in 1689.<sup>264</sup> After 1690 an entirely new situation arose. The London Directors wrote in a despatch to Bengal that "Bengall silk is the very best commodity that can now be sent from India, it being at an excessive rate, by reason of the obstructions which the present war hath given to the Turkey trade."<sup>265</sup> Turkey also supplied coarse silk to England and Europe during the seventeenth century. In 1690 Turkey was involved in a war with France, Poland and Venice. It had to face a new enemy in the Russians, who invaded the Crimea.<sup>266</sup> The commercial relations between Turkey, England and Europe were interrupted by the war and the East India Company utilised the opportunity by importing into England all sorts of Indian silks.

The English in Bengal, after having received their *farman* of free trade from the emperor in 1690, concentrated their business at Sutanuti, which at a later period came

<sup>263</sup> See *Supra*, pp. 144-152

<sup>264</sup> E. Lipson, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>265</sup> Letter Book No. IX, p. 297.

<sup>266</sup> *Cambridge Modern History*, vol. V, pp. 367-68.

to be known as Calcutta. Sutanuti became the chief centre of the English trade under Job-Charnock.

In 1693 Charnock died and Ellis was appointed to succeed him. The agency of Bengal was again subordinated to Fort St. George.<sup>267</sup> On 18th August 1693, Sir John Goldsbrough, one of the Company's Directors, arrived at Sutanuti and discovered that the Company's affairs were in the greatest disorder from their servants being either incompetent or negligent of their duty. On examining the commercial proceedings in Bengal he had found that the agent had contracted for an investment of a lakh and a half rupees above their existing stock.<sup>268</sup> John Goldsbrough applied to the faujdar of Hugli to obstruct Captain Pitt, an interloper, who came with a large vessel. He wrote to the faujdar that if Pitt should be allowed to trade, the English must again leave the country. In answer the faujdar promised to stop the sales and purchases of Captain Pitt.<sup>269</sup> However, Sir John Goldsbrough died in January 1694. In 1695-96 no stock came from London. In the season 1696-97 and in 1697-98, 30,000 ingots of silver and 110 chests of silver came respectively.<sup>270</sup> The Directors' order was to invest that money in muslins, taffetas, raw silk or other staple commodities of Bengal.<sup>271</sup> In 1698 the English Company (the new company) started investing in Bengal products. The amount of bullion exported by the English Company in the season 1698-99 was estimated at £153,000 and by the old company £200,000. The English Company supplied to their agency

<sup>267</sup> Bruce, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 144.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>270</sup> Letter Book No. IX, p. 407.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*

in Bengal in the season 1700-1701 six ships loaded with bullion and goods, viz. :

By the	<i>Rising Eagle</i>	—	£36,068. 0. 0.
„ „	<i>Stretham</i>	—	£71,346.13. 5.
„ „	<i>Bengal</i>	—	£2,351.10. 11.
„ „	<i>De Grave</i>	—	£62,810. 1. 9.
„ „	<i>Katherine</i>	—	£9,904. 15.11.
„ „	<i>Upton Valley</i>	—	£29,551. 1. 3.

These figures have been taken from the Mss. Letter Book No. XI of the Commonwealth Relations Office. But in Bruce's *Annals of the Honourable East India Company*, the estimated amount will be found as follows :<sup>272</sup>

<i>The Eagle</i>	—	£42,390.
<i>Stretham</i>	—	£71,300.
<i>Bengal Merchant</i>	—	£62,350.
<i>De Grave</i>	—	£62,800.
<i>Katherine</i>	—	£12,000.

The ship *Upton Valley* has not been mentioned in this *Annals*, and we do not know whence he took his figures, which are quite different from those of the Mss. Letter Book, which is evidently the most reliable authority. Therefore, the figures which are given by Bruce are wrong.

These six ships with a large stock came to Bengal with the intention of procuring a large quantity of Bengal produce for European markets. Rivalry started between the two companies. Both companies instructed their factors in Bengal to procure as much raw silk as possible. In the case of taffetas the old Company's order was limited to between 16,000 to 17,000 pieces. The English Company's order for taffetas, on the other hand, was 15,000 pieces during the period between 1698 to 1702. The orders for silk rumals by the two companies did not

<sup>272</sup> Bruce, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 392.

exceed 7,000 pieces. The reason for the fall in the number of taffetas and rumals may be that both the companies were taking an increasing interest in raw silk, wrought silk and cotton goods, which also became prominent in the Company's order lists.

The two companies carried on their trade simultaneously and their competition increased the exports of raw silk and wrought silk from Bengal. The total export of raw silk and wrought silk from Bengal by the two companies gradually increased from 1698.<sup>273</sup> It is to be noticed that in 1698-99 only 9828½ lbs. of Italian wrought silks were imported into England. Sheldon, one of the Directors, on being asked the reason for this diminution informed the House of Lords that taffetas or plain silks for linings were imported into England from Italy and France. But "those we have of late years brought from Bengal are found to be more durable and useful and are sold here in England for little more than half the price of those brought from Italy and France".<sup>274</sup>

But what was more important was that this East India trade led to the revival of opposition in England to the East India Company. The attack came from the woollen and silk manufacturers. They attacked the East India Company on the ground that the East India trade led to the export of bullion from England and the country obtained in exchange for gold and silver Indian textiles which competed with the native textile industry.<sup>275</sup>

Accordingly, an Act was passed in 1700 which laid down that "from September 29th 1701, all manufactured

<sup>273</sup>See Appendix II, Table III.

<sup>274</sup>Quoted in S. A. Khan's *East India Trade*, p. 280.

<sup>275</sup>Letter Book No. X, p. 36.

silks, Bengals and stuffs mixed with silk or herba,<sup>276</sup> of the manufacture of Persia, China, or East Indies and all calicoes painted dyed, printed or stained there which are or shall be imported into this Kingdom of England, dominion of Wales and town of Berwick on Tweed, shall not be worn or otherwise used within this Kingdom and also of £200 penalty on the persons having or selling any of them.<sup>277</sup>

In spite of the Prohibition Act, the English Company sent in the season 1701-1702, 161 chests of silver with cloth and other goods amounting to £177, 140. 4s. 5d.<sup>278</sup>

In 1702, on 22nd July, the two companies were united. After the Union instructions came from the Court of Managers for the united trade to the East Indies as follows : "we have this year sent out but a small stock because both companies have so large effects out on their separate accounts and so many goods by them, but next year we intend to drive the trade to the full".<sup>279</sup> The total stock of the United Company rose from £30,656.11s.4d. in 1703 to £40,067.10s.6d. in 1705,<sup>280</sup> but this amount was well below the average because of war with Spain. In the next two years the stock of the

<sup>276</sup> It is difficult to ascertain the exact nature of *herba*. Herb means a plant "which the stem does not become woody and persistent (as in a shrub or a tree), but remains more or less soft and dies down to the ground after flowering". J. A. H. Murray, *A New English Dictionary*, p. 230. Ralph Fitch states that "In this place (Orixa) is...great store of cloth which is made of grasse, which they call yerua, it is like a silke". *Hakluyt voyages*, vol. II, p. 389. Alexander Hamilton mentions in his *A New Account of East Indies* that "Herba is a sort of tough grass. Of Herba they make gingham" —p. 397.

<sup>277</sup> Letter Book No. X, p. 271.

<sup>278</sup> Letter Book No. XI, pp. 373, 393.

<sup>279</sup> Letter Book No. XII, p. 52.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

United Company rose a little and was estimated at £5,5021.10s.11d. in 1706 and at £160,000 in 1707.<sup>281</sup> Large capital thus made possible a spectacular increase in the volume of export of raw silk and wrought silk from Bengal.<sup>282</sup>

The prices of taffetas and raw silk varied according to quality. The prices paid by the English Company in Bengal are as follows :

Plain taffetas 30 to 60 yds. long	— Rs. 4 to Rs. 6 per piece.
Best quality plain taffetas of the same length	— Rs. 7 to Rs. 8 „ „
Raw taffetas 20 coveds <sup>283</sup> long and 2 coveds broad	— Rs. 43 per corge. <sup>284</sup>
Putta <sup>285</sup> silk	— as 15 to 19 as.
Puttany <sup>286</sup> silk	— Rs. 5½ to Rs. 6½ per seer.
Ordinary raw silk	— Rs. 2. 12½ as per seer.
White silk	— Rs. 1. 4 as to Rs. 4 per seer.

### *Cotton goods*

From 1558 to 1669 the general order of the Court of Directors was to purchase annually 400 bales of cotton yarn, 2,000 to 3,000 pieces of *Sannoos*,<sup>287</sup> 1,000 to 6,000 pieces of *Addaties*,<sup>288</sup> 2,000 pieces of *Cassaes*,<sup>289</sup> 5,000

<sup>281</sup>Letter Book No. XIII, p. 94.

<sup>282</sup>See Table II of Appendix II.

<sup>283</sup>Formerly in use as the name of a measure, varying much locally in value. The word is probably an Indo-Portuguese corrupt form of the Portuguese *covado*, a cubit or ell.

<sup>284</sup>A mercantile term for a "score". The word is in use among the trading Arabs and others as well as in India. Tavernier, vol. II, p. 5.

<sup>285</sup>See *supra*. p. 170, foot note. <sup>286</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>287</sup>Fine muslin.

<sup>288</sup>Fine muslin with gold borders.

<sup>289</sup>Fine and elegant muslin.

pieces of Ginghams,<sup>290</sup> 1,000 pieces of *Atlassee*<sup>291</sup> and 1,000 pieces of *Lungi*.<sup>292</sup>

After a temporary decline during the second Anglo-Dutch war, this cloth trade was very vigorously pursued. For instance, the annual order for cotton goods which were to be provided from Bengal rose from 25,350 pieces in 1669 to 38,100 pieces in 1671.<sup>293</sup> In 1674 an order came from London to provide 10,000 pieces of sannoes, 4,000 pieces of coloured ginghams, 6,000 pieces of Dacca cossaes, 2,000 pieces of Hugli cossaes, 1,000 fine mulmuls, 2,000 pieces of fine *humhums*<sup>294</sup> and 8,000 pieces of *nillaes*.<sup>295</sup> The order remained the same during 1675 and 1676. In 1677 the Directors asked the Bengal factors to follow their orders for cloth strictly and if possible to increase the number of *nillaes* and fine cossaes. Between 1679 and 1683 the order for Bengal cloth underwent a spectacular increase.<sup>296</sup>

Besides a large investment in cotton goods the Company had in mind to erect a manufactory for sailcloth and linens. It was supposed that in Bengal they might raise flax fitted for these manufactures, which were at this time supplied by Holland and Flanders. This plan, if it succeeded, would encourage industry and navigation, depress the manufacture of the rival nation and add to the English resources.<sup>297</sup> But there is no evidence to

<sup>290</sup>Material made from cotton yarn dyed before being woven.

The Indian Ginghams were apparently sometimes of cotton mixed with some other material.

<sup>291</sup>Satin—a silk stuff wrought with threads of gold and silver.

<sup>292</sup>A cloth simply wrapped once or twice round the lower portion of the body and tucked in at the upper edge.

<sup>293</sup>Letter Book No. IV, pp. 305-403.

<sup>294</sup>A cloth of thick stout texture.

<sup>295</sup>Some kind of blue cloth.

<sup>296</sup>See Table IV of Appendix II.

<sup>297</sup>Bruce, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 482.

show the outcome of the order. In 1684, as Dacca mulmuls, *tanjeebs*<sup>298</sup> and cossaes had become very popular in England, Bengal was called upon to supply as many mulmuls, tanjeebs and cossaes as possible.<sup>299</sup> Fine muslins were coming increasingly into use for both male and female dress.

After 1685 the Company's trade in Bengal suffered from their war with the Mughals. The Letter Book which contains the Director's letter of 1685-86 shows no particular lists of commodities. But in 1687 the Directors wrote that "the muslins and printed calicoes had become the wear of the ladyes of the greatest quality".<sup>300</sup> Thus in 1688 and in 1689 the Home authorities asked the Bengal factors to provide as many fine muslins of all sorts as possible, fine *doreas*,<sup>301</sup> ordinary nillaes, coloured gingham, humhums and specially mulmuls, tanjeebs and cossaes from Dacca, Malda and Kasimbazar.<sup>302</sup> A new item was added to the order. This was *gurrahas*.<sup>303</sup> of which the Directors asked for 10,000 pieces. The order for cloth remained high in 1690, despite the decline of trade in Bengal due to the war with the Mughals. The total order of the years 1695 and 1696 was for 319,800 and 444,000 pieces of cloth respectively.<sup>304</sup> From 1698 to 1702 the total list of orders for cloths in the principal areas by the old company were as follows :<sup>305</sup>

<sup>298</sup> Persian, meaning "body-adorning". It was a fine muslin.

<sup>299</sup> Letter Book No. VII, p. 82.

<sup>300</sup> Letter Book No. IX, p. 55

<sup>301</sup> A double thread muslin.

<sup>302</sup> Letter Book No. IX, pp. 77, 82, Letter Book No. X, pp. 45, 90.

<sup>303</sup> Unbleached fabrics which go under names varying in different localities. They are used for packing goods—*Hobson Jobson*, p. 707.

<sup>304</sup> Letter Book No. IX, p. 407.

<sup>305</sup> Letter Book No. X, pp. 32-36, 407, 409.



<i>Principal area</i>	<i>Year</i> <i>1698</i>	<i>Year</i> <i>1700</i>	<i>Year</i> <i>1702</i>
Kasimbazar	20,000 pieces	25,000 pieces	30,000 pieces
Hugli	13,000 „	20,000 „	20,000 „
Dacca	15,000 „	20,000 „	20,000 „
Malda	12,000 „	13,000 „	10,000 „
Totals	60,000	78,000	80,000

It thus appears that the Kasimbazar factory had provided more cloth than other factories. The English Company's total order for cloth from 1698 to 1699 was 73,500 pieces. In view of the increasing demand in England for fine muslins, tanjeebs, cossaes and soosies, etc., the English Company's factories were also asked between 1700 and 1702 to procure for Europe as much as possible.<sup>306</sup>

The Prohibition Act of 1701 failed to stop completely the imports of Indian calicoes into England. In 1702 therefore an import duty of 15% was imposed on plain cottons. This shifted the demand from coarse and cheap calicoes to superior muslins. In the last three years of our period, especially in 1707, was an extensive order for Bengal cloths which can be shown in the following figures :<sup>307</sup>

1705	—	123,000 pieces
1706	—	87,000 „
1707	—	159,900 „

But the figures available for the East India Company's actual import of cloth in the years May 1704 to April 1706 show that it was less than the actual order. The Company exported 23,473 pieces of Bengal cloth during this period. Between May 1705 to April 1706 the Com-

<sup>306</sup>Letter Book No. XI, pp. 166, 262.

<sup>307</sup>Letter Book No. XII, pp. 66, 68., Letter Book No. XIII, pp. 105, 107, 210.

pany's total export from Bengal was 65,740 pieces. From May 1706 to April 1707, 17,655 pieces of cloth were exported.<sup>308</sup>

The price of sannoes, gingham, fine nillaes and ordinary nillaes fluctuated more than that of other cotton goods. This fluctuation in prices was owing to the competition of the Dutch. The English correspondence at this time discloses considerable rivalry between the Dutch and themselves. But the prices paid by the Dutch East India Company for Bengal cotton goods are not known. However, the following table will show the fluctuation of price in gingham, and nillaes :

<i>Goods</i>	<i>Price in 1679</i>	<i>Price in 1685</i>	<i>Price in 1690</i>
Ginghams <sup>309</sup>	Rs. 56 per corge	Rs. 59 per corge	Rs. 56 per corge
Fine nillaes <sup>310</sup>	Rs. 80 per corge	Rs. 81.8 as per corge	—
Ordinary <sup>310</sup>	Rs. 70 per corge	Rs. 67 per corge	Rs. 63 per corge

The price of 40 coved long and 20 coved broad mulmuls, 40 coved long and 2 coved broad cossaes and 14 coved long and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  coved broad atlas varied throughout our period from Rs. 7.4 as to Rs. 8.4 as., Rs. 7 to Rs. 10.4 as and Rs. 2. 8 as. to Rs. 3 respectively.

Apart from saltpetre, sugar, silk and cotton goods, the English East India Company also exported turmeric, ginger and sometimes pepper. But the order for these commodities was not regular.

<sup>308</sup> Bengal Journey and Ledger. vol. 73, p. 65, vol 75, pp. 52,54.

<sup>309</sup> H.F.R., vol. II, p. 73, H. F. R., vol. IV, p. 55.

<sup>310</sup> H.F.R., vol. II, p. 85, H.F.R., vol. VI, p. 30.

*The English East India Company's imports into Bengal*

Of imports into Bengal, bullion, particularly silver, formed the most important item. As Bengal's revenue was sent to the central treasury in the form of sicca rupees, the demand for bullion continued throughout the period. Next to bullion came broadcloth and fabrics of wool called perpetuanaes, for which there was very little demand in Bengal. The English company was required to export a certain quantity of these fabrics every year, which it did, notwithstanding the losses to which it was put in certain years. The Directors wrote in March 1661 that it was their "earnest desire that such commodities as we send from home may find a large consumption in all parts of India". They gave permission to the Bengal factors to sell English goods at cheap rates.<sup>311</sup> But they had little success in their efforts. Among the common people of a tropical country there was no demand for broadcloth. Only in upper India it was prized by the aristocratic classes. In the Factory Records of the Company we have no systematic record of the selling prices of the English goods, yet those we have are useful. In 1666 broadcloth was sold at Rs. 5.12 as per yard.<sup>312</sup> But a decline in the demand for broadcloth is noticeable in 1680, when it was sold at Rs. 3 per yard.<sup>313</sup> This fall in prices may be due to the fact that the Company offered broadcloth as *dadni* to merchants supplying them the cotton and silk piece goods. But the merchants did not like to block their capital by purchasing broadcloth at a time when there was no demand for it. Metals—lead, copper, iron, vermillion and quicksilver—occupied the third place in the list of imports

<sup>311</sup> Letter Book No. III, p. 37.

<sup>312</sup> *B.F.R.*, vol. I, p. 32. <sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

into Bengal. Lead was much used in making shot or manufacturing red-lead. Therefore, it was in demand in Bengal. In 1677 lead was sold at Rs. 8 per maund and in 1680 at Rs. 7.<sup>314</sup> Throughout our period the price of lead varied from Rs. 7 to Rs. 8 per maund. Copper was also in demand, particularly at Patna, where it was partly used for coinage and partly sent to the areas of Benares and Gorakhpur. The price of copper in our period varied from Rs. 30 to Rs. 36 per md. Quicksilver was much employed from very ancient times in making vermilion and medicines. In 1677, 80 seer quicksilver was sold at Rs. 3. 4as per seer.<sup>315</sup> Though these metals were generally the products of England, and were shipped to Bengal directly by the English Company, the Company could not extend their business in this line, because the Dutch company imported all these metals from Japan, China and Indonesia and sold them in the Bengal market under conditions of keen competition with the English Company.<sup>316</sup>

It is noteworthy that in spite of disagreement about customs duty between the English Company and the Mughal sūbadars, its trade with Bengal remained very steady. The steadiness and progress of its commercial affairs is attested by the export value of Bengal products of about £230,000 in 1681. Thus the growth and development of the English East India Company at this time was one of the more notable forces at work in creating a propitious environment for the radical economic advances which occurred later in the seventeenth century.

<sup>314</sup> *H.F.R.*, vol. I, p. 33.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>316</sup> Bal Krishna, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

### SECTION III

#### OTHER EUROPEAN COMPANIES IN BENGAL

The Portuguese, who formed the first European Company in the 16th century, had the major portion of the seaborne trade of India under their control, and in this period they secured a trade monopoly with the eastern countries. It has been mentioned previously that in Bengal the Portuguese had established a trade centre at Hugli in the sixteenth century. The trade of the Portuguese had dwindled to an almost negligible quantity during the period under review. This may be dated from their defeat and expulsion from Hugli by the Mughals in 1632. Since 1632 they had almost ceased to have any commercial connections with Hugli. Their descendants seem to have quietly sunk into the position of subjects, first of the nawāb of Bengal, afterwards of the English. In 1676 we find that Mr. Clavell, the English agent, wrote in his account of the trade of Hugli, that the Portuguese had no trade, though numbers of them made a living chiefly as sepoys in the service of the Mughal governor.<sup>317</sup> Later, we find them serving as sepoys under the English.

About a century later than the Portuguese the Dutch made their first venture to the East. In 1602 the different Dutch companies, which sprang up in several towns of Holland and Zeeland for the Indian trade, united and reorganised their affairs.<sup>318</sup> At this time the Moluccas, the fabulous Spice Islands, attracted every European nation. The spice trade of the Moluccas was looked upon

<sup>317</sup> *Miscellaneous Factory Records*, vol. 26, p. 18.

<sup>318</sup> *The Cambridge History of India*, vol. V, p. 30.

as the greatest prize of eastern commerce. A factory was established at Batavia in west Java, from where the Dutch could dominate the straits of Sunda and Malacca and the seas between Borneo and Sumatra through which shipping from the Indian ocean to the Eastern seas and from the Moluccas or the China sea to the west had to pass.<sup>319</sup> The Dutch came to India mainly to supply the requirements of the Archipelago. It has been mentioned previously that the system of paying in money for pepper and spices had great disadvantages in the Archipelago. The only commodity acceptable there was Indian textiles. The Dutch traders found that there was an active commercial activity in existence with Bantam and Achin, where the traders of the Archipelago exchanged their own products for cotton goods from Gujarat and the Coromandel Coast.<sup>320</sup> The Dutch tried to control that movement and to eliminate the Arabs and Indian middlemen. In India they found that Masulipatam was a place well fitted for buying cotton goods. In 1605 and in 1606 the Dutch Agency was sent to Masulipatam and Surat as well.<sup>321</sup> In 1610 the Dutch established themselves in Pulicat and in the coast of Coromandel. Pulicat was made the Dutch headquarters in the South for all their business on the coast. Masulipatam remained their headquarters in the north.<sup>322</sup> The Portuguese had already cleared the way westwards to Africa and America via Europe for textiles from India. The Dutch followed the same route, but their trade did not develop as they expected. The Portuguese still had a strong foothold in Surat. They had dominated its seaborne trade and they

<sup>319</sup> *The New Cambridge Modern History*, vol. V, p. 417.

<sup>320</sup> *Cambridge History of India*, vol. V, pp. 32-33.

<sup>321</sup> W. H. Moreland, *From Akbar to Aurangzib*, p. 32.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

were also established in strength at Diu and Daman.<sup>323</sup> But the portuguese supremacy did not remain unchallenged, because the strength of the Dutch company was also based on its seapower. Gradually, the Dutch reduced their Portuguese opponents in the Indian Ocean to a position of complete impotence.

After receiving a *farmān* from Jahāngīr in 1618, the Dutch established a factory at Surāt.<sup>324</sup> In 1621 Van den Broecke became the Director and extended the Dutch commerce with their open enemies, the Portuguese, in Bengal. Bengal is served by two estuaries, the Meghna and the Hugli. Of these the Meghna was dominated by the pirates of Chittagong and the Hugli estuary was also threatened by pirates though to a lesser extent; in addition, the dangers attending its navigation were notorious. Consequently, it was a great risk to reach the port in order to obtain commercial relations in a territory whose trade was almost entirely in the hands of the Portuguese.<sup>325</sup> Moreover the political condition of Bengal was not stable. The constant wars and rebellions caused disturbance in its commercial life. For this reason, the Dutch obtained Bengal goods at Masulipatam from Indian merchants.<sup>326</sup> However, the Portuguese were expelled from Hugli in 1632, and in 1634 the Dutch obtained a *farmān* from Shāh Jahān allowing them the right of trading in Bengal.<sup>327</sup> In the same year instructions came from Batavia to make an attempt to trade with Hugli direct.<sup>328</sup> But as the local merchants were

<sup>323</sup> *Purchas*, I, p. 206 ff.

<sup>324</sup> H. Terpstra, *De Opkomst der...*, p. 228

<sup>325</sup> W. Foster, *EFI* (1618-21), pp. 14, 213.

<sup>326</sup> *Hague Transcripts*, vol. I, pp. 63, 139.

<sup>327</sup> Stavorinous, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 77.

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 318.

not friendly with them, the Dutch factors decided to move down to the mouth of the river at Pipli where Bengal goods could be obtained by the Indian middlemen without any disturbance from the local merchants. This they did in 1636.<sup>329</sup> Pipli was soon abandoned for Balasore. From there they sent buyers up country. The main items of their export from Bengal were at first silk and sugar. Though the Dutch realised the cheapness of Bengal silk they had no regular part in the silk trade of Bengal, as the Dutch Company was bound by its past with Persia. As the Persian market was suitable for spices, the commodities in most demand, the Dutch supplied it with these and in exchange secured a large proportion of the silk trade of Persia.<sup>330</sup> For a time it was a profitable arrangement but in the middle of the seventies the European demand for Persian silk began to decline when the Dutch noticed that Bengal textiles started to compete with Persian silk in the market.<sup>331</sup> Though the Dutch commerce was carried into Bengal, it was not before 1651 they established their head quarter at Hugli. The factory at Balasore was retained only for the convenience of their ships. After their establishment at Hugli, the Dutch carried on their trade vigorously. They exported from Bengal refined saltpetre, rice, cloth and ginger. The staples purchased by them were raw silk from Kasimbazar and saltpetre from Patna, and the development of the former trade was their most conspicuous achievement. In the Netherlands the selling price of Bengal silk was fixed above that of Persian but below that of Chinese silk.<sup>332</sup> The Dutch enterprise was responsible

<sup>329</sup>Hague Transcripts, vol. I, 318.

<sup>330</sup>K. Glamann, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

<sup>331</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>332</sup>K. Glamann, *op. cit.*, p. 122.



for the opening of the Japanese market to the raw silk of Bengal. In 1640, 338½ lbs. of Bengal silk were sent to Japan as a sample.<sup>333</sup> This marked the beginning of a very important line of trade. In 1654 the Dutch factory at Hugli was swept away by floods, upon which they built a new factory lower down at Chinsura, which is said to have been built in 1656.<sup>334</sup> At first it was kept within the jurisdiction of the Coromandel government but its growing importance caused the government at Batavia in 1655 to give it a separate status as the Directorate of Bengal.<sup>335</sup> The volume of Dutch trade with Bengal increased steadily. Their trade with Bengal was of the order of a lakh of rupees in value in the years before 1650 but in 1661 it was close on 20 lakhs.<sup>336</sup> The amount of investment shows that Dutch trade in Bengal was evidently far greater than that of the English who, with their limited resources were naturally lagging far behind.<sup>337</sup> In 1661 the English trade, apart from saltpetre, was small ; <sup>338</sup> and yet they were maintaining large factories at Patna, Kasimbazar and Hugli.

At this time the Dutch became anxious about their legal rights in Bengal. In 1662 the governor of Batavia sent Dirk van Adricham, the Director of Surat factory, as ambassador to Aurangzib. As a result, a *farmān* was obtained favourable to their commerce in Bengal, Orissa and Bihar, on payment of 3½ per cent customs only once in any coast of those provinces.<sup>339</sup> Following the receipt of the royal *farmān* Dutch trade grew apace in subsequent

<sup>333</sup>T. Raychaudhuri, *Jan Company in the Coromandel*, p. 178.

<sup>334</sup>Stavorinus, vol. I, p. 516.

<sup>335</sup>T. Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

<sup>336</sup>Moreland, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

<sup>337</sup>W. Foster, *EFI* (1661-64), p. 71.

<sup>338</sup>See *Supra*, 159 ff.

<sup>339</sup>*B.M.A.M.*, No. 29095, p. 1., *Manucci*, vol. II, p. 62, note 1.

years, and its increasing volume is clearly evident from the accounts of Tavernier and Bernier. Tavernier wrote in 1663 that he was amazed at the vast quantity of cotton cloth of all sorts which was carried away by the Hollanders to Japan and Europe.<sup>340</sup> According to Tavernier, Kasimbazar was the silk emporium of Bengal, from where the Dutch sent 6,000 to 7,000 bales of silk annually to Japan and Holland.<sup>341</sup> Bernier, who came in 1666, wrote that "the Dutch have sometimes 7 or 800 natives employed in their factory at Kasimbazar, where in like manner the English and other merchants employ a proportionate number".<sup>342</sup> These statements prove that Dutch business was thriving in Bengal. The English correspondence at this time discloses considerable jealousy between the English and the Dutch, who had a great influence in Bengal commerce.<sup>343</sup> The English complained to the Madras factors that if the Company did not supply them with sufficient stock their business in Bengal would be totally overthrown.<sup>344</sup>

The Dutch generally remained neutral in the politics of India, but it appears from the English correspondence that the Dutch in Bengal were not free from troubles. In spite of their efforts to avoid friction with the local Mughal officers in Bengal, who frequently interfered with the passage of boats laden with saltpetre and sugar, as well as with the silk and cotton weavers, the Dutch suffered at the hands of the *nawāb Shāista Khān*.<sup>345</sup> In

<sup>340</sup> *Tavernier*, vol. II, p. 140.

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>342</sup> *Bernier*, p. 440

<sup>343</sup> *R.O.C.*, vol. 29, Letter No. 3141.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter No. 3168.

<sup>345</sup> *H.F.R.*, vol. VII, p. 72.

1672 the Dutch Company's chief banian Banburam died suddenly. He was indebted to Malik Qāsim to the amount of Rs. 30,000 and also owed the Dutch a similar amount. They applied to Malik Qāsim and, with his assent, the Dutch forced the widow of the banian to pay. After paying Rs. 13,000 she also died and Malik Qāsim took the matter to the *nawāb* and reported that the Dutch had murdered the woman. So one of the Dutch factors was imprisoned till Rs. 28,000 were realised from them as part of the debt owed by the deceased Banian to Malik Qāsim. The Director of the Dutch factory then sent his agent to the *nawāb*'s court at Dacca to complain against Malik Qāsim's conduct in extorting from them money that they did not owe. Although Malik Qāsim was summoned to Dacca to answer the accusations against him, as he presented the *nawāb* with Rs. 70,000 he retained his post as *faujdār* of Hugli.<sup>346</sup> But after returning to Hugli Malik Qāsim provoked the *nawāb* and the *diwān* against the Dutch to such a degree that orders were issued to all parts under *Shāista Khān*'s government prohibiting the emperor's subjects from trading with them or serving them. The Dutch trade at any rate was hampered. At Hugli they were not allowed to export rice which they had bought for that purpose.<sup>347</sup> However, the Dutch settled the matter by paying money to the *nawāb* and his officers.<sup>348</sup> In 1678 they paid four per cent customs duty and in the same year they gained further success by procuring an order from Aurangzib for the refund of Rs. 196,000 that had been extorted from them in 1672 on account of the trouble over the death of

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>347</sup> Miscellaneous Factory Records, vol. XII, p. 207.

<sup>348</sup> See *Supra*, p. 64.

their bānian's widow ; and it was reported that Malik Qāsim had to pay Rs. 35,000 towards this sum.<sup>349</sup> The Dutch spent considerable sums this year in presents, especially in Dacca to the nawāb Fedai Kkān and in Patna to Prince Ā'zam. This lavishness thus ensured them better treatment at the hands of the *nawāb* and Prince Ā'zam. Meanwhile, the Dutch founded a factory for salting pork at Baranagar, north of Calcutta.<sup>350</sup> But they could not continue their policy of non-intervention. In August 1684 a Dutch squadron of four ships arrived at Baranagar from Batavia, evidently to put pressure on the local government for the free passage of their boats, as a result of which their sugar and saltpetre boats were allowed to go down river without hindrance in November of that year. However, a little later, they had a fresh quarrel with the Mughal government of Bengal and withdrew from their factories but, on war breaking out with the English in 1686, they were again put in possession of Baranagar so that they made a considerable profit in trade.<sup>351</sup> In 1696 occurred the rebellion of Sova Singh, who captured the town of Hugli towards the end of the year. The governor of the Dutch factory at Chinsura drove the rebels out of Hugli. Under the permission then given by the *nawāb* of Bengal to the European traders to defend themselves, the Dutch built Fort Gustavus at Chinsura. Alexander Hamilton, who came to Bengal in 1705-8, attested to the prosperity of Chinsura, which he described as the "seat of the Dutch emporium".<sup>352</sup>

The Dutch enjoyed a really flourishing trade in the midseventies. Although it is very difficult to give a full

<sup>349</sup> *H. F. R.*, vol. VII, p. 94.

<sup>350</sup> *The Diary of William Hedges*, vol. II, p. 240.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

picture of the volume of their trade in Bengal, a general idea of it can be gathered from available material of this period. We have said before that they exported from Bengal sugar, saltpetre, textiles and rice. In the early seventeenth century the Dutch East India Company exclusively dealt in sugar originating from China, Taiwan, Siam and Bengal. It appears from Dr. Glamann's *Dutch Asiatic Trade* that Bengal powder sugar had a market in the Netherlands, particularly at Amsterdam.<sup>353</sup> Moreover, the Dutch took the opportunity of selling Bengal sugar in Surat, which had been previously done by the Indian merchants. The Dutch also carried Bengal sugar to Persia. In 1680-88 the Dutch sold from their Persian factories a total of 5 million lbs. of powdered sugar imported to Persia from Bengal.<sup>354</sup> During the period from 1680 to 1709 Bengal sugar was sold by the Dutch in greater quantity in the market of Surat than was Batavia sugar.<sup>355</sup>

Saltpetre was another article exported from Bengal by the Dutch. Large quantities of saltpetre, which were procured mainly from Patna and refined at Hugli or Pipli, were often shipped direct to Batavia. In the earlier part of 1649, 840,000 lbs. of saltpetre were procured only from Patna.<sup>356</sup> The Dutch supplied saltpetre from Bengal to the coast of Coromandel for the manufacture of gunpowder.<sup>357</sup> As the demand for gunpowder remained constantly high, the factory of Coromandel as well as the factories of Persia and

<sup>353</sup> Alexander Hamilton, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 11.

<sup>354</sup> K. Glamann, *op. cit.*, pp. 153, 160-61.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>357</sup> T. Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*

Ceylon were called upon to provide for Batavia. Saltpetre from Bengal was also supplied to their Ceylon factory for making gunpowder.<sup>358</sup> Hence, Bengal Saltpetre had great importance in the Dutch trade.

Of the Bengal textiles silk was an important article of export by the Dutch. The export of Bengal silk to both Holland and Japan had started from 1640, but its volume was then insignificant. However, in 1649 the quantity exported from Bengal was as much as 60,000 to 70,000 lbs.<sup>359</sup> At the beginning of 1650 the Court of Directors in Holland fixed their annual order at 50,000 lbs,<sup>360</sup> and in September 1651 they wrote to their factors in Bengal that Bengal silk had become very profitable. In Table V of Appendix II, the figures show that Dutch business in Bengal in 1653 was not only large but progressive. The profits on Bengal silk in Holland remained consistently high, but in Japan they were higher than in Holland.<sup>361</sup> In Japan the average rate of profit was 100%.<sup>362</sup> For this reason the Dutch Directors decided to stock the bulk of Bengal silk for the Japanese market, though it appears from Table V that after 1653 this demand for Bengal silk did not increase. Moreover, from 1655 to 1670 orders for Bengal silk fluctuated along with its price, owing to supplies of silks from other centres of Europe to the Netherlands. But in 1676 in their despatch to Bengal the Dutch director asked for *tanny*<sup>363</sup> silk and in a very

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>360</sup> K. Glamann, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

<sup>361</sup> T. Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>363</sup> A superfine quality of silk was called *tanny* in Dutch and *puttany* in English, because it was a short-threaded reel of the best part of the cocoons, the so-called *pattani* threads—K. Glamann, *op. cit.*

short time the demand for this surpassed that of *cabessa*, *barriga* and *Pee*.<sup>364</sup> As about the middle of the 1680's a rise in price began ; the order for 1686, as appears from Table V, surpassed the order of 1653. This demand increased because of small supplies of Persian silk of poor quality. The period from 1686 to 1690 is considered to be that in which the Dutch trade with Bengal was in the most prosperous condition. When in 1686 the English East India Company declared war against the Mughal, the Dutch East India Company's Directors were concerned more with profit than with the acquisition of territory. Tables III and VI of Appendix II show the export of silk from Bengal by the Dutch and the English at the end of our period, and indicate the great and steady progress of both the companies up to 1700, though a comparison in the number of pieces does not show such progress, as the sizes were widely different, while the figures show that the English Company's export during this period was much greater than that of the Dutch. The Dutch were not destined to enjoy their ascendancy for long. The growing resources of the two rival English companies and their increasing exports to Europe undermined the Dutch activities in Bengal. As we do not know the value of the total export of silk from Bengal during the period under discussion, it is not feasible to make a comparison of the Anglo-Dutch trade in Bengal. However, it may be realised from Appendix II that competition was severe, and Bengal trade had acquired an immense importance during this period.

<sup>364</sup> These were Portuguese terms of special qualities of Bengal silk. *Cabessa*, *barriga* and *Pee* were used to denote 1st, 2nd, and 3rd quality, and are equivalent to the English *head*, *belly* and *foot*—K. Glamann, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

Like the Dutch and the English, the French were engaged in Bengal foreign trade during this period. The efforts of the French to establish contact with Bengal dated from 1674, when the *nawāb Shāista Khān* permitted them to establish settlements in some commercial centres of Bengal.<sup>365</sup> Thus at Hugli the French made a small factory near the Dutch garden. In 1676 Streynsham Master wrote in his diary that a little south of the Dutch factory at Chinsura he passed a spot which had been laid out as a factory by the French,<sup>366</sup> but the land was then in the occupation of the Dutch. As the Dutch did not like the French factory near their own factory house, they applied to the Mughal officers at Hugli and ousted the French.<sup>367</sup> The French appear to have made no further efforts at settlement or trade in Bengal for a period of twelve years. But by the *farmān* of Aurangzib in 1688 they occupied Chandernagore and established a factory there, which was not completed till 1692.<sup>368</sup> It was not till 1692-93 that the French succeeded in obtaining a *farmān* from Aurangzib with permission to trade in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa on the same terms as the Dutch.<sup>369</sup> In 1696 at the time of Sova Singh's rebellion, the French settlement at Chandernagore was fortified by the construction of Fort Orleans. By the end of the seventeenth century, the French had established their factories at Dacca, Kasimbazar, Balasore and Patna. According to Alexander Hamilton the French trade suffered at the beginning of the eighteenth century from want of money, but from 1715 onwards the increasing importance of the

<sup>365</sup> *Cambridge History of India*, vol. V, p. 72.

<sup>366</sup> *The Diaries of Streynsham Master*, vol. I, p. 325.

<sup>367</sup> Thomas Bowrey, *op. cit.*, p. 69, note 3.

<sup>368</sup> *The Diaries of Streynsham Master*, vol. I, p. 325.

<sup>369</sup> Ed. A. Martineau, *Lettres et conventions*, p. 9.



French made the English, who were then short of capital, borrow money from them.<sup>370</sup>

The activities of the Danes in Bengal started in 1676 when Wilk Wygbert the Danish Commodore went to Dacca to visit then *nawāb Shāista Khān*. The *nawāb* on receiving Rs. 5,000 gave a *parwāna* to the Danes, to trade free of duty in Bengal and Orissa, and to build a factory on the bank of the river Hugli.<sup>371</sup> The factory was built in Gondalpara to the southeast of Chander-nagore. A part of Gondalpara is still called Dinemar-danga, the land of the Danes.<sup>372</sup> They also established a factory at Balasore. In 1698 the Danes obtained another *parwāna* from 'Azim-us-shān, the *nawāb* of Bengal, who granted them liberty to trade in Bengal. It is difficult to ascertain the relative position of the Royal Company of Denmark as a trading agency in Bengal during the period under discussion. But it may be assumed that Danish trade in Bengal did not prosper to the same extent as those of the other European companies.

<sup>370</sup>S. K. Bhattacharya, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>371</sup>Thomas Bowrey, *op. cit.*, pp. 181-90.

<sup>372</sup>J.J.A. Campos, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

## CHAPTER VI

# SOCIETY, RELIGION AND EDUCATION IN MID-SEVENTEENTH CENTURY BENGAL

### *The Social Structure*

In seventeenth century Bengal those Hindus and Muslims who held a privileged position were distinguished from other members of society by the titles of *Rājās* and *Zamindārs*. In pursuance of the imperial policy of frequent transfer, the higher government officials, the *nawāb*, the *dīwān* and the *Qāzī* moved from province to province. Consequently, they did not fit into the dominant pattern of Bengal society.

For centuries Hindu merchants from Western India had migrated to Bengal. Towards the close of their careers, these merchants bought large estates in order to achieve social status which, in Bengal, went with land ownership. For instance, the founder of the *zamindāri* of Burdwan was once Sangram Ray, a Khattri Kapur of Kotli in Lahore. One Rajput, named Hazari Keshab Malla came to Bengal with Todar Mall in 1580. Keshab Malla's two sons, Bhara Mall and Bishnudas, settled in Vikrampur, a suburb of Dacca. They obtained the title of *Rājā*.<sup>1</sup>

Possession of wealth was just a ladder to this social ascendancy. With the *Rājās* and *Zamindārs*, the merchant class could associate on terms of equality if sufficiently wealthy. This wealth, to which elaborate references are to be found in medieval Bengali literature, was almost

<sup>1</sup>Ed. J. M. Bhattacharya, Ketakadas's *Manasa mangala*, Introduction, p. 14.

fabulous. We find in the *Manasa Mangal Kavya* that the life of Chando the merchant differed little from that of a *Rājā* ; he lived in equal state, built as grandly and spent as prodigiously on furniture, food and servants.<sup>2</sup> But not all merchants were like Chandsadagar.

Centering on the *Rajas* and the *Zamindārs* were certain privileged classes, the *Rajas'* or *Zamindārs'* *dīwāns*, *Nāibs*, *Qānūngos* and *Bakhshīs*, all holding small estates. They often had considerable influence on their masters. In our period, *ṣadr Qānūngo* Darpanarayan's *nāib* Raghunandan, came to be a *zamindār* of Rajshahi parganā.<sup>3</sup> In the process of time, as we shall see,<sup>4</sup> many of these *zamindārs'* *dīwāns* and *nāibs* themselves became wealthy *zamindārs*.

Besides these, there were professional classes among the Hindus. They were, so to speak, the bridge between the rich and the poor. Most of these classes had titles that signified their callings. The Brahmin class, however, was an exception to this. Though professionals, they commanded a social position as high as that of a *zamindār* or a *Rājā*. Nor were their titles significant of their professions. Not only in Bengal but throughout India the Brahmins were held in high esteem and veneration. Bharat Chandra's *Vidya Sundar* tells us that there were Brahmins who studied the vedas, grammar, lexicons, smṛiti and philosophy.<sup>5</sup> Ruparam's *Dharmamangala* refers to a galaxy of Brahmin scholars of Navadvipa in the mid-seventeenth century. A class of Brahmins, popularly known as priests, worshipped the deities in the temples as a profession.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid* , pp. 25-26.

<sup>3</sup> Kaliprasanna Bandyopadhyaya, *Banglar Itihasa*, p. 68.

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix I.

<sup>5</sup> Bharat Chandra Ray, *Vidyasundara*, p. 131.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

Among the better class Muslims, the sayyids were held much in esteem by the general mass. The Muslim people ascribed superiority to them because of their connection with the family of the Prophet.<sup>7</sup> The Alims or teachers of the Maktabas had great respect in Muslim society. These *Mullās* and the *Qāzīs* who were fairly well-versed in religious principles, played important parts in the society of the Muslims. The *Mullās* earned their livings from religious performances such as marriage ceremonies.<sup>8</sup> The Hindu Vaidyas and the Muslim *Hākims* were expert in the diagnosis of diseases by feeling the pulse.

The rest of the Hindus included the ordinary merchants, shopkeepers, bankers, *Kānsaris* ( bell-metal merchants ), *Sānkharis* (conch bracelet dealers), goldsmiths, blacksmiths, milkmen, carpenters, betelleaf dealers, *tilis* (oil pressers), *mālākārs* (garland makers), potters, agriculturists, washermen, fishermen, barbers, dancers and musicians.<sup>9</sup> Among the muslims, there were *Jolhās* (weavers of coarse cloth), *Kabāris* (fish mongers), *kagachas* (paper makers), *darzis* (tailors), *rangrāzes* (painter of cloths), *kasāis* (sellers of beef) and *hājijams* (barbers who also performed rituals).<sup>10</sup>

We can agree with T. K. Raychaudhuri that the soldiers in the service of the government, local *Rājās* and *Zamindārs* were no less important an order of the society.<sup>11</sup>

There are refercnces to slaves belonging to the lower orders of the social structure. They were usually employed in the families of the *Rājās* and rich merchants as personal

<sup>7</sup> Abdul Karim, *Social History of the Muslims in Bengal*, p. 150.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid* , p. 172.

<sup>9</sup> Bharat Chandra Ray, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>10</sup> Mukundaram, *Kavikankan Chandi*, pp. 260-61.

<sup>11</sup> T. K. Ray Chaudhuri, *Bengal under Akbar and Jahangir*, pp. 165-66.

attendants or domestic servants.<sup>12</sup> Alaol's *Sapta Paykar* refers to a numerous host of slaves performing menial duties in the service of the king Baharam.<sup>13</sup> As articles of commerce slaves had importance in the medieval Bengal. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to carry on the slave trade in Bengal before the advent of the English power. Their settlements in eastern India found it a source of income and carried on a slave trade in active collaboration with the Maghs, whose Kingdom, Arakan, bordered Bengal and Burma. They regularly kidnapped men, women and children from the eastern districts of Bengal and sold their human cargoes in Arakan. Mukundaram's *Chandimangal* refers to *Harmādas* (Portuguese warships) which created a panic in Bengal.<sup>14</sup> The slave hunting of the Portuguese pirates ravaged east Bengal. *Shiāb-ud-din Talish* tells vividly how the Maghs and the Portuguese pirates brought captives from different parts of Bengal to Tamluk to sell in the Market.<sup>15</sup> These slaves were also regularly bought and sold in local markets and their deeds of sale received official recognition from the local *Qāzī*.<sup>16</sup> The factory records of the English East India Company testify to an imperial order, served to the *faujdār* of Hugli in 1676. This directed the *faujdār* to make the English, Dutch and Portuguese sign a paper undertaking not to buy any slaves who were children of Muhammadan parents as the Portuguese did at the time. The order further stated that the foreign merchants had returned three drafts of the agreement

<sup>12</sup> Manikram Ganguli, *Dharma mangala*. pp. 15-20.

<sup>13</sup> Ed. Edal Nizami, *Alaol's Sapta Paykar*, p. 20.

<sup>14</sup> Mukundaram, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>15</sup> Continuation of Talish's *Fathiyā-i-'ibriyā*, translated by J. N. Sarkar in J.A.S.B., 1907, p. 421.

<sup>16</sup> T. K. Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

with amendments of their own, and declared that they had never practised such a trade ; it was also said in the document that the Dutch, who for years together, had exported a great quantity of slaves, had not signed any such agreement.<sup>17</sup> In 1663-64 a severe famine visited Dacca.<sup>18</sup> In consequence, many people sold themselves to the rich under deeds of sale sealed by the *Qāẓī*. One deed of sale has been found which records a certain Chandala's voluntary sale of himself and his family as slaves for nine rupees to one Ramjiban Maulik of Dacca.<sup>19</sup> The deed starts thus : "In the reign of Maharajadhiraja, the glorious Sullutana ( Sultan ) ( 'Ālamgīr ) Bādasha, when appointed by him, the glorious *Shāista Khān* was the ruler of the Gauda country; when appointed by him Isphiandār *Khān* was the *Jāgīrdar* of tapa Dhamrai in Sullutana-pratapa; when appointed by him Sri Nandalal Mahasaya was the *sikdār* of tapa Dhamrai in the saka year 1588, under the superintendence of Gopinath Majumdar, a resident of Kayasthapada in the town of Dhamrai sold himself with his wife and children of his own free will in order to pay off debts, etc., for a sum of nine rupees to Ramjivan Maulik (a resident of Kayasthapada at Dhamrai) on the 27th Sravan in the year 1047 (14th August, 1667)".

As in modern times, the Hindu population of Bengal comprised an indefinite number of graded endogamous kins or castes. H. H. Risle defines caste as a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name ; claiming a common descent from a mythical ancestor, human or divine ; professing to follow the same hereditary calling and regarded by those who are competent to give an

<sup>17</sup> *H.F.R.*, vol. II, p. 7.

<sup>18</sup> *History of Bengal*, vol. II, p. 126.

<sup>19</sup> *Archaeological Survey of India*, 1922-23, pp. 144-146, Jatindra Mohan Ray, *Dhakar Itihasa*, vol. II, p. 508.

opinion as forming a single homogeneous community.<sup>20</sup> The most characteristic feature of a caste is endogamy, i.e. caste determines the boundaries of the social circle within which marriage is permitted and without which it is forbidden. The second important feature is occupation which tends to be hereditary. Thirdly, it fixes the status of groups and subgroups in a hierarchical order. The literary works of the mid-seventeenth century and eighteenth century refer to Brahmins, Kayasthas, Vaisyas and sundry other castes. The Brahmin was and still is regarded as the highest caste in the society. The Brahmins lived under the patronage of the *Rājās* or the *Zamindārs*. They gave lands and presents to Brahmin teachers. In the priesthood there is still a definite form of social grouping in which certain members of the community form a group marked off from the rest by social functions connected with religion.

Kulinism constitutes an integral part of the caste texture of the Bengali Hindus. Since its birth, it has been the most potent force among the Hindus of Bengal. Even in the period under review, Kulinism must have been in vogue, though no *kulashāstras* of our period are available. But in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Kulinism rose to the pinnacle of glory.

In the tenth century, according to tradition, Bengal was supposed to be socially corrupt in the extreme. Quite forgetful of the vedic rites, the Brahmins indulged in unbrahmanical practices and rituals, which, according to tradition, were characteristic of the *Kaliyuga*. They even encouraged inter-marriage among the Brahmins to level all distinctions of birth. The other castes followed suit.

<sup>20</sup> H. H. Risley, *Tribes and castes of Bengal*, vol. I. Xlii ff.

Ballal Sen, however, is said to have come as a great reformer of this decadent Hindu society of Bengal. In order to revitalize the moribund society he introduced *Kaulinya*.<sup>21</sup> He is said to have imported five Brahmins and five Kayasthas to develop *Kaulinya*. The nine virtues, as prescribed by *Kaulinya* are : good conduct, humility, learning noble works, pilgrimage, temperance, noble profession meditation and charity. Attainment of these attributes and their manifestation in character would raise the Brahmins to the sort of a nobility. In this way the Brahmins were classified into three orders namely (1) *Kulinas*, (2) *Srotriyas*, (3) *Bangaja*. A sub-section of the law divided the *Kulinas* into 36 *melas*<sup>22</sup>. The law forbids inter-mela marriage. The strict followers of *Kaulinya*, especially of the marriage law were raised to the categories of *Naikashyas* (pure *Kulinas*) and the breakers of the rules were strictly condemned to social degradation. Kulinism, in the main, follows the female line. Marriage between the same *mela* was permissible. The law even permits the marriage of a *Kulina* boy with a *srotriya* girl, but the marriage of a *Kulina* girl with a *srotriya* boy was strictly forbidden. Nor could a *Kulina* boy marry a *Bangaja* girl without losing his *Kaulinya*. Any breach of marriage law would lead a *Kulina* to a social fall, varying from a small degradation to the loss of *Kaulinya*. In the process of time, the breakers of the law formed a fourth order of the Brahmins, known as *Bangshajas*.

In order to avoid complication of *melas*, the sons of the *Kulinas* preferred marrying daughters of the *srotriyas* to girls of their own group.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the *srotriyas* were

<sup>21</sup> Ananda Bhaṭṭa, *Vallāla Caritam*. Ed. Haraprasad Shastri, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> N.N. Basu, *Bāṅga Jātiya Itihāsa*, vol. I, Part I, p. 187.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*



very affluent and they too coveted *Kulina* sons-in-law. Such marriages were encouraged inasmuch as they raised the social status of the *Srotriyas* and spared the *Kulinas* the trouble of tracing the ancestry of brides and further increased their affluence. But marriage between a *Srotriya* and a *Bangaja*, though theoretically permissible was in practice impossible.<sup>24</sup> Kulinism had some evil effects. It circumscribed the marriage boundary of the *Naikashyas*. Necessarily, many poor *Kulina* parents were involuntarily led to give their daughter in marriages to husbands having many wives.<sup>25</sup> Thus Kulinism encouraged polygamy. It also sealed the fates of many young girls who became widows too early in youth. For want of a suitable bridegroom many a *Kulina* bride was condemned to life-long virginity.

We have no genuine contemporary works on caste. But the *Chandimangala* of Mukundaram, a late sixteenth century work, and *Vidyasundara* of Bharat Chandra, a mid-eighteenth century work give a long list of castes.<sup>26</sup> Thus *Vidyasundara* mentions that the *Kayasthas* and sundry other castes did not belong to any particular occupation.<sup>27</sup> Many of the poets of our period such as Dhukhi Samadas, Ketakadas, Govindadas and Krishnaramdas were *Kayasthas*,<sup>28</sup> the members of the second group of Bengali castes. The *Kayasthas* were and still are divided into two sections, *Kulina Kayastha* and *Maulika-Kayastha*. This division was made on the basis of their possession of the following virtues : good conduct, humility, learning noble works, pil-

<sup>24</sup> N. N. Basu, *Banger Jatiya Itihasa*, vol. I, part I, p. 236.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* p. 238.

<sup>26</sup> Mukundaram, *op. cit.*, pp. 262-268, Bharat Chandra, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

<sup>27</sup> Bharat Chandra, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

<sup>28</sup> S. K. Sen, *Bangla Sahityer Itihasa*, vol I, pp. 295, 298.

grimace, faith viz., a (good) profession, religious austerity and charity. These nine virtues formed the yardstick of the *Kulina Kayastha*.<sup>29</sup> Being learned, pure in heart and body, of a good temper, charitable doing good to others, serving the King and being kind to all, are the seven qualifications of the *Maulika Kayastha*. In their marriage system this caste borrowed such rules and practices as were current among the *Kulina Brahmins*. It was believed that purity of blood could be maintained only by marriage between persons of the same group to the exclusion of others. The *Kulinas* among the *Brahmins* and the *Kayasthas* received great regard in the society.

The *vaidya* caste in Bengal occupied a position of considerable importance. Bharat Chandra's *Vidyasundara* says that the *vaidyas* feel the pulse of patients and thereby diagnose disease. They follow the medical profession for which they study *Kāvya* and *Ayurveda*.<sup>30</sup>

The *vaisyas* were generally found as agriculturists, cattle rearers and merchants. In our period *vaisyas* were mostly merchants. Ketakadas's *Manasamangal* uses the term Sada-gar or Saha (merchant) for *Vaisyas* who trade exclusively by sea.<sup>31</sup> We find in the English Factory Records a number of names such as Chintamani Sha, Mathura Sha,<sup>32</sup> Hira Sha, Nilu Sha, Gurudas Sha,<sup>33</sup> and Gangaram Sha, belonging to merchants who were dealing with the English East India Company. Here Sha is definitely a corrupted spelling of Saha. In Bengal Sahas are of the *vaisya* class. Besides those Sahas we have a list of other names in the English Factory Records such as Khetchand, Malik-

<sup>29</sup>Rajendra Kumar Ghosh, *Kayastha Samaja tattva*, p. 30.

<sup>30</sup>Bharat Chandra Ray, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

<sup>31</sup>Ketakadas, *Manasamangala*, p. 14.

<sup>32</sup>*H.F.R.*, vol. II, pp. 10, 12, 14.

<sup>33</sup>*B.F.R.*, pp. 22, 24, 25.

chand, Fatechand, Jasoda Nandan, Haricharan, Abhiram, Rajaram, Raghuram, Brojaram, Sibram, Gulab Ray, Gunaram Biswas, Subal Das, Sama Das, Moniram Poddar, etc. They were also the company's local merchants. It may be assumed from those names that trade came to be regarded as a legitimate occupation for all castes. However, the rigidity of the caste system did not allow the mobility of social groups. Thus a member of the *baniā* (merchant) caste or a weaver might advance himself by acquiring wealth and professional training, but they had no opportunity to raise themselves to a higher social stratum. With the framework of caste and sub-caste, rules of marriage, occupation, and eating and drinking were connected in medieval Bengal.

Islam, in theory, admits of no caste-distinction, yet the Muslims of Bengal were divided into four sections on a racial basis. They were the Sayyids, the Mughals, the Pathans and the Shaikhs. Some Muslims even monopolized certain professions. Each of these professional groups was akin to a caste. The *Kabari* (fishmonger), the *Kagaji* (paper-maker), the *Rangraj* (cloth-dyer) and so on assumed a caste-like character. Bipradas's *Manasa Vijay*, a late fifteenth century work, and the *Chandimangal* of the late sixteenth century give evidence of Muslim functional castes. Bipradas speaks of the Sayyids, Mullas and Qazis as holding a social position through their professions. Mukundaram refers to many professional castes of the lower orders.

Caste among the Hindus not only determined status but also influenced religious beliefs and practices. Necessarily, its function as a religious grouping largely influenced Hindu society.

During the reigns of the Sena Kings, who migrated from the Karnata country and were Brahmins by caste,

we find, Brahmanism as the dominant religion in Bengal.<sup>34</sup> The Senas and Varmans, who took over the thrones of the Palas and Chandras respectively, actively worked for the progress of the Brahmanical religion. Brahmins were on the highest rung of the social ladder and were revered and looked up to by the general mass.

The Muslim invasion of the thirteenth century was not a death blow to the Brahmanical religion, though it shook the caste system to some extent. A number of low caste Hindus embraced Islam. The Muhammadans as the new ruling class, did not interfere with the social and spiritual movements of the Hindus, among whom the Brahmin was a great power. The reasons for accepting the superiority of Brahmins are that the highest type of Brahmins were the *Brahmagnānis* (yogis) who renounced the world and developed mystic powers of the soul by communion with God. Only the Brahmins were entitled to practise *Brahmagnāna*, the highest type of yoga. We read in the *Mahābhārata* that it was the Brahmin whose anger destroyed the clan of the Yadus, effaced the progeny of King Sagara, stigmatised the God moon and made the sea water saline and the fire omnivorous.<sup>35</sup> In the Pauranic period people did not learn to rely on their own strength but to depend, for everything, on the grace of Gods and Brahmins. The literature of that period and Bengali translations of Sanskrit works such as the *Bhāgavata*, the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata* first gave an impetus towards popularising the doctrines of the Pauranic religion.

A radical upheaval took place in the religion throughout Northern India during the fifteenth century. That was the *Bhakti* movement. Closely connected with this

<sup>34</sup>R. C. Majumdar, *History of Bengal*, vol. I, p. 397.

<sup>35</sup>Kasiram das, *Mahābhārata*, p. 115.

movement were the rise and flowering of Vaishnavism in Bengal. The decline of Buddhism and revival of Pauranic Hinduism under the Senas brought about the popularity of Vaishnavism. As the Bramans held a superior position in society the rules of caste became more stringent—the gap between man and man was widened by caste restrictions. Vaishnavism tended towards equality and freedom, for it taught that men of all classes could come near to God by uttering his name with pure faith and leading a simple and righteous life. The caste system underwent some changes. Chaitanya is said even to have converted some Muhammadans to his faith, such as Yavan Haridas and Bijuli Khan, among others.<sup>36</sup> Chaitanya's two disciples Nityananda and Virabhadra took into the Vaishnava ranks many who belonged to the lowest strata of the Society.<sup>37</sup> Through the example of the numerous disciples of Chaitanya such as Haridas and Syamananda, who were born outside the pale of the upper caste, and the idea definitely gained ground that one could transcend caste barriers through purity of one's devotion. Anti-caste tendencies were inherent in the vaishnava movement. But the attempt ended in failure. The very spirit of Vaishnavism with which Chaitanya embraced the Chandalas and Muslims and admitted them as his disciples vanished in the post-Chaitanya period.

Thus, the two currents, the invasion of the Muslims in the thirteenth century and the introduction of the Vaishnavism in the fifteenth century, failed to modify the outward structure of society to any appreciable extent.

A new force, interested in the social problems of the traditional society such as the formidable issue of caste,

<sup>36</sup>Krishnadas Kaviraj, *Chaitanya Charitamrita*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>37</sup>T. K. Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

began to operate towards the end of the seventeenth century. That force was the spiritual invasion of the Portuguese missionaries. No nation came to India with a religious zeal more fervent than that of the Portuguese. For decades, the Portuguese pirates carried death and destruction along the coasts of Bengal. In our period, there came Jesuits to hurl a spiritual attack on the society of Bengal. From the end of the sixteenth century to the middle of the eighteenth century Bengal was one of the mission fields of the society of Jesus. Soon after the Jesuits came the Augustinians who later became much more numerous in Bengal.

In 1576 the two Jesuit Fathers, Antonio Vaz and Pedro Dias and a secular priest named Juliano Pereira, Gangarides Archimystes, as Father Monserratte called him, arrived in Bengal. In the same year Pedro Tavares, a Portuguese captain, arrived in Satgāon where he heard that the Emperor Akbar wished to meet two Portuguese.<sup>38</sup> Consequently, he with many servants, went to Agra. After having several interviews with Pedro Tavares, Akbar was highly impressed with his conduct and granted him a *farmān* to preach the Christian faith openly, to erect churches and to baptise those natives who willingly accepted Christianity.<sup>39</sup> On his request, Akbar invited Juliano Pereira, who was then vicar in Hugli, to explain to him the tenets of the Christian religion and he, having done so, requested the Emperor to summon more learned priests from Goa. Thus came the mission of Father Rodolfo Acquaviva.<sup>40</sup>

In 1580, after returning from Agra to Bengal, Pedro

<sup>38</sup> *Travels of Manrique*, vol. I, p. 37.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>40</sup> Pierre de Jarric, *Histoire des choses plus Memorables, etc.*, vol. I, Part 4. p. 125.

Tavares applied to the Viceroy at Goa and the Bishop of Cochin for missionaries.<sup>41</sup> Thus between 1598 and 1599 Father Nicolau de Pimenta, the chief of the Jesuits in Goa, sent four Jesuits, Francisco Fernandes, Domingo de Souza, Melchoir de Fonseca and Andre Boves from Cochin to Bengal.<sup>42</sup> After the arrival of Domingo de Souza and Father Fonseca in Hugli, they received an invitation from Pratapaditya, the Raja of Jessore, to pay him a visit. But they first went to Chittagong in the course of their missionary tour.<sup>43</sup> In October 1599, Fernandes went to Chandikan<sup>44</sup> where he was most cordially received and Pratapaditya even permitted him to propagate his faith and to erect a church.<sup>45</sup> Father Fonseca, in the meantime became successful in obtaining permission from the Raja of Bakla to preach the Christianity in his own territory.

On the other hand, the Augustinians, who were the fourth religious order, tried to come to Bengal. When the application of Pedro Tavares reached Goa, they were just waiting to come as soon as the season permitted. In 1600 seven Augustinians came. These Augustinians not only extended their labours all over Bengal, but prepared the field for the Jesuit missionaries, who came later from time to time. However, in 1612, the Augustinians established themselves in Dacca and built a church there.<sup>46</sup> The siege of Hugli by the Mughals during *Shāh Jahān's* reign checked the progress of the Catholic religion, but only for a short time. In the very next year, 1633, the

<sup>41</sup> *Travels of Manrique*, vol. I. p. 38.

<sup>42</sup> Pierre de Jarric, *op. cit.*

<sup>43</sup> H. Beveridge, *History of Bakharganj*, p. 173.

<sup>44</sup> H. Beveridge considers Chandikan to be identical with Jessore — *History of Bakharganj*, p. 176.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* p. 174.

<sup>46</sup> *Travels of Manrique*, p. 38.

Christian Fathers and other Portuguese returned with a grant of 777 bighas of land,<sup>47</sup> (about 260 acres) from *Shāh Jahān* and with privileges which they had never enjoyed before at Hugli. From that time onwards the Augustinians spread themselves all over Bengal.

Thus Bengal experienced the intrusion of a vigorous foreign culture in her soil. In 1663 the Maghs captured a prince of Bhusna and took him to Arakan. From there Manoel de Rozario, an Augustinian Father, bought him and converted him to Roman Catholicism,<sup>48</sup> giving him the name of Dom Antonio de Rozario. Dom Antonio, with his own unaided efforts, succeeded in converting to Christianity some of the peasants in the neighbourhood of his own patrimony.<sup>49</sup> He was at first arrested by the *nawāb Shāista Khān*, but was subsequently released. He was allowed to spread Christianity on the condition that he would not try to convert the Muslims.<sup>50</sup>

In course of time, Dacca and Sripur in eastern Bengal and Hugli in western Bengal became official missionary centres. The Augustinian Fathers for some years made their headquarters in Koshabhanga, a village in Bhusna, between Hugli and Dacca. In 1666 Bernier noticed that "Ogouli alone contained eight to nine thousand Christians"<sup>51</sup> and the Jesuits and the Augustinians possessed there large churches.<sup>52</sup> Between 1671 and 1685 a movement of conversion among the ryots of Dom Antonio brought to Bengal ten missionary Fathers, who found a

<sup>47</sup>The Augustinians took possession of the 772 bighas of land about 280 bighas of which still belong to the Bandel Convent —J.J.A. Campos, *Bandel Convent and Church*, p. 37.

<sup>48</sup>*B.M.M.M.* No. Add. 9855, fol. 31-32.

<sup>49</sup>Edward Maclagan, *The Jesuits and the great Moguls*, p. 127.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.* p. 128.

<sup>51</sup>Bernier, *Travels of the Mughal empire*, p. 439.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*



most promising field in the province.<sup>53</sup> The report of the Jesuit Father Anthony Magalhaens relating to the Bengal mission in 1678 filled the Provincial at Goa with a sense of urgency. This report gave a vivid description of their tours to the converts' villages, far and near around Dacca and it also gave statistics of the local converts. The first Christian village they visited was Aguinpor, near Dacca and the Father found 500 Christians in another nearby village. He next visited four villages about three miles from Dacca. These villages called by him Dapa, Guederpor, (sic) Codomtoly and Panga (sic) had a Christian population numbering more than 400. The Father noticed 200 houses of the same at the village Xerahy (sic). Sailing to Donra (sic) the father found 30 houses of Christians and 6 in Attabo,<sup>54</sup> a village on the other side of the river. At Cordotambo he found 18 Christian houses. The river-side villages Aoita, Beldir, Andia, Caratia and Mirabo<sup>55</sup> contained 136 Christian houses. In the meantime the Father's illness prevented him from making an inland tour. He sailed along the river and visited other river-side villages. In those villages there were altogether 1160 Christian houses. He even visited villages on the banks of the river Brahmaputra where the houses of new Christians totalled 400<sup>56</sup>.

<sup>53</sup>In 1671 came to Bengal, Fr. Emmanuel Gonsalves, Fr. Anthony de Figueiredo, and Fr. John de Magalhaes. In 1673 Fr. John de Magalhaes (apparently not the same as the preceding Father of the same name), Fr. Anthony de Figueiredo, in 1677, F. Benedict de Casta, Fr. Emmanuel Gonsalves, in 1685, Fr. Ignatios Gomez, Fr. Manoel Sarayva, in 1684-85, Fr. Mark Anthony Santucci, Fr. Didacus Leitao and Fr. Louis de Sylva came to Bengal.—*J. A. S. B.*, 1911, pp. 15-23.

<sup>54</sup>It may be identified with Katrabuh, because Katrabuh is situated on the banks of the river Lakhiya—A.H. Dani, *Dacca*, p.29.

<sup>55</sup>These villages are not familiar to us today. Probably the river encroached and swallowed up these villages.

<sup>56</sup>Letter from Father Anthony Magalhaens to the Provincial at Goa, *B.M.M.M.*, No. Add. 9855, fol. 99-101.

In addition, Father Magalhaens found the house of neophytes in the neighbouring villages of Hugli, where the Augustinians had churches.<sup>57</sup> The number of neophytes created by the Augustinians through Dom Antonio, caused dissatisfaction of the Jesuit Mission at Goa. The Augustinian vicar of Bandel, Father João de Ascensão did not agree to hand over his mission to the Jesuit Fathers.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand the Jesuits note that "we entered the territory of the Mughal before them (the Augustinians); that before the fall of Hugli we had been the first to enter Bengal and that after the fall of Hugli their Fathers never took upon themselves to be more than vicars in the ports..."<sup>59</sup> Father de Queyros, Provincial at Goa further argued that the number of neophytes had increased through the ardent zeal of Dom Antonio, not through the Augustinian Fathers. Dom Antonio begged the Augustinians for fourteen years to support him with mission priests but without success. Consequently, he decided to entrust the mission to the Jesuits.<sup>60</sup>

In 1679, Father Santucci came to Bengal to uphold the Jesuit claim at Bhusna. In 1680, the Provincial at Goa issued orders to buy a house in the lands of Dom Antonio, to increase Christianity there and to build chapels, where the Holy sacraments might be fittingly administered.<sup>61</sup>

Both in Goa and in Bengal an effort was made to come to an understanding with the Augustinians, but in both places the effort failed. The Jesuits established

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 100

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 99.

<sup>59</sup> Letter from Father de Queyros, Provincial at Goa to Bengal, Add. 9855, fol. 130.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

themselves in villages like Bhusna, Loricul<sup>62</sup> and Naluacot at a distance from Dacca. Father Santucci baptised more than two hundred converts who were sufficiently instructed in the mysteries of their faith by the Catechists.<sup>63</sup> In Dacca, Father Santucci met the Prior of the Augustinians, who eagerly agreed to hand over the charge of all the new Christians of Dom Antonio's mission.<sup>64</sup> But a dispute arose when a vessel arrived from Goa with an order to drive the Jesuits out of Bengal. When Father Santucci did not agree to leave 3,000 Christians unprotected for lack of missionaries the Augustinians replied that was their affair. Then Father Santucci visited many villages near Dacca where he baptized nearly 500 people.<sup>65</sup> Thus their converts, who mostly belonged to the low castes, were scattered over a large area.<sup>66</sup>

The Jesuits tried their best to give instruction to the newly converted Christians. Father Santucci made mention of the fathers' Yeoman's service to the new converts in his writing. Having to instruct them, the fathers learned their language well, composed vocabularies, a grammar, a confessionary and prayers. Francisco Fernandes composed a small treatise explaining summarily the points of the Christian religion and a small catechism in the form of a dialogue. Father Dominio de Souza translated this work into Bengali.

Despite the Jesuit Father's instruction, the neophytes maintained their old Hindu customs ; they sacrificed to

<sup>62</sup> 28 miles south of Dacca.

<sup>63</sup> Letter from Father Santucci from Hugli to the Provincial at Goa, Marsden Mss, Add 9855, fol. 132.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 133.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

idols and their marriages and funerals were conducted by Brahmans. They had little or nothing of real Christianity. Though Father Magalhaens and Father Santucci tried to help Dom Antonio, who was heavily in debt after buying the village, Dornonegor<sup>67</sup> he left the Jesuits and attached himself to the Augustinians.<sup>68</sup> Gradually the position of the Jesuits mission became worse. The Augustinians raised obstructions in every respect. Though in 1685 orders were issued from the Provincial at Goa to withdraw the Jesuit mission in Bengal, the Jesuit Fathers struggled to hold fast to their rights there.<sup>69</sup> In 1694 and in 1697 two Jesuits, Father Louis Fernando and Father Peter Martin, came to Bengal.

The conversion of higher caste Hindus raised a question in the Jesuit society. A letter from Father Peter Martin to Father Le Gobien at Goa made the question clear to them. The letter starts thus, "Though you have often heard the word caste, you perhaps do not know the full import of it. Caste implies an assemblage of several families of the same Rank or Profession. This distinction is found properly only in the Empire of Mogul in the Kingdom of Bengal, in the Island of Ceylon and in the great peninsula of India opposite to it. There are four principal castes, that of the Bramins, being the first and the noblest, that of the Rajas, who boast of their descents from various royal families; next the castes of the Coutra and lastly that of the Parias. Each of these castes is subdivided into several branches, some of which are nobler than the rest. The caste of the Shootras is the

<sup>67</sup> A name given by Dom Antonio. It means village of conscience — *B.M.M.M.* No. Add. 9855, fol. 99.

<sup>68</sup> Letter from Father Ignatius Gomez from Bhusna to the Provincial at Goa. *B.M.M.M.* No. Add. 9855, fol. 141.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

most extensive and had the greatest number of branches. ...though the castes of the Parias is the only one considered as infamous and whose several individuals are scarce allowed to have any concern in the duties of several life, nevertheless there are certain professions which debase those who exercise them almost to the Rank of Parias. Thus a shoemaker, and every man who is anyway concerned with leather and in many places fishermen and shepherds are considered as Parias. The Portuguese not knowing at their first settling in this country the difference between the higher and lower castes did not scruple to treat indifferently with them all, to take Parias and Fishermen in their service and to employ them indiscriminately as their necessities required. This behaviour of the first Portuguese disgusted the Indians and was highly prejudicial to our holy Religion, they from that time, considering the Europeans as a contemptible people and fancying that having the least dealings with them would be dishonourable...."<sup>70</sup> Consequently, the Jesuits failed to convert the higher caste Hindus.

However, the Jesuits found that the Muslim rulers did not interfere in their activities, so they hoped to see "all Bengala Christian".<sup>71</sup> If a layman like Dom Antonio could convert three thousand people, the evangelists could easily convert all "Bengala inhabitants".<sup>72</sup> With this expectation the Fathers sometimes offered money to people to be converted. They wrote to the Provincial at Goa "it is necessary to give money to new Christians because they are very poor and more so after baptism, for they are convinced that when they

<sup>70</sup> Tr. Lockman, *Travels of the Jesuits*, Letter from Father Martin to Father Le Gobien, vol. I, pp. 357-60.

<sup>71</sup> Letter from Father Magalhaens to Goa, Add. 9855, fol. 100.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

become Christian not only are they obliged to leave off the rites and customs of gentiles but also the occupations and professions that they followed before".<sup>73</sup> In reply the Provincial warned the Fathers that they would "enrich their souls, not their purses, and you will realise that if you open your hand a little they will soon expect more and it will not be possible to help so many poor, nor can we stay in Bengala if they expect more of us".<sup>74</sup> At last in 1697 Father Peter Martin observed that two kinds of persons had embraced the Christian religion. The first were those who tried to secure Portuguese protection against the tyrannical government of the Muhammadans and the second either "the dregs of the people or slaves who had been turned out of their castes for their dissolute behaviour"<sup>75</sup>

It seems that the neophytes of Bengal had not been deeply impressed by the dogmas of the Christian religion. To men and women who were either in poverty or suppressed by the rigidity of Hindu caste system conversion was particularly appealing. This was the case in the thirteenth century when the Muslims came. In the name of the evangelization of the Pagans of Bengal, the ecclesiastical authorities made grants of large doles against each conversion, which in the estimation of the Portuguese missionaries was a pious act. In spite of their best efforts the Fathers succeeded in converting only a negligible percentage of the population and those converted mostly belonged to the downtrodden class of Bengal society and the long list of converts and their records, as we have already seen is belied by other sources of our

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 101.

<sup>74</sup> Letter from Father De Queyros, provincial at Goa, Add. 9855, fol. 131.

<sup>75</sup> Tr. Lockman, *op. cit.*, p. 360.

period. But one would surely err if one took the long lists of their conversions as accurate. The doles might have induced them to manipulate the exact figures to their advantage. But not all the Fathers were intent on amassing money for themselves. The sources of our period show that the Portuguese missionaries' attempt to shake the social structure of Mughal Bengal was a total failure. It hardly effected any breach in the citadels of either orthodox Hinduism or orthodox Islam. The causes of this failure were not far to seek. First, the cruelty of the Portuguese was not easily effaced from the minds of the people; second, the missionaries were interested in the people of Bengal as potential converts, but they were not interested in the humanitarian aspects of the formidable problem, that was caste system of the traditional society. To them conversion itself was a great social change, for it marked a change from heathenism to Christianity, and nothing in the eyes of the missionaries could be a more profound social change. This conception of social change had its limitations. It could hardly help in meeting the unprecedented problems that remained in the traditional society.

## *SECTION II*

The pattern of life in mid-seventeenth century Bengal was controlled firmly by tradition and custom. The accounts contained in non-contemporary works often present a picture substantially the same as that of a proximate epoch.

Religion forms part and parcel of Bengali culture. Though a considerable number of the population was

influenced by the Vaishnava doctrine the great majority of the Hindus were of different religious sects and these with their rites and customs continued to dominate the society. So far as the common people were concerned, they would show their reverence to all deities. The poets of the mediaeval Bengali *Pāñchālīs* and *Mangal Kavyas* bowed before shrines of every cult and those dedicated to Muslim saints were not excepted.<sup>76</sup>

The socio-ethical ideas had had no change in our period. The son's duty to his parents and the wife's to her husband continued the same religious obligations. After the death of her husband a woman would often burn herself on his funeral pyre. This practice was called *suttee*. It was prevalent during the period under discussion and is referred to by contemporary European travellers. According to Tavernier "I remember another strange occurrence which happened one day in my presence at Patna, a town of Bengal. I was with the Dutch at the house of the governor of the town, a venerable noble...when we were seated a young and very beautiful woman who was scarcely more than twenty-two years of age entered the reception room. This woman came to ask the governor's permission to burn herself with the body of her deceased husband. This governor, touched by the youth and beauty of the woman, sought to turn her from her resolution, but she only became more obstinate".<sup>77</sup> The governor, finding no other way, told her in a rage that she might go to the devil.<sup>78</sup> Though the practice of *suttee* was forbidden during Aurangzib's reign, it was nevertheless current. One letter from the Hugli Agent of the English East India Company to the Court of Directors in

<sup>76</sup>T. K. Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

<sup>77</sup>Tavernier, *Travels in India*, vol. II, pp. 221-22.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*



London expressed a grievance against Job charnock, whose behaviour made them displeased.<sup>79</sup> Charnock, the Hugli Factory Agent, went on one occasion with his ordinary guard of soldiers to see a performance of *suttee*, but he was so moved with the widow's beauty that he sent his guards to take her by force from her executioners and conducted her to his own lodgings. They lived happily many years and had several children.<sup>80</sup>

The average Muslim, as portrayed in the writings of the mid-seventeenth century Muslim poets of Arakan, was both pious and orthodox. Among social functions circumcision and marriage played the most important part in the Muslim society.<sup>81</sup> Muslims are described as offering the five obligatory prayers a day, regularly reading the *Quran* and scrupulously observing the *Ramazan* fast.<sup>82</sup>

#### *Trends in Religion :*

In the sixteenth century the vaishnava movement passed through certain stages of evolution. It underwent a corresponding change in character. The post-Chaitanya Vaishnava movement in Bengal at its earliest stage showed two distinct trends simultaneously at Navadvipa and Vrindavana. The ideas of the Navadvipa school are reflected in the writings of the Murari Gupta, Kavikarnapura and Narahari Sarkar. Their writings bear upon the adoration of Chaitanya as the highest and ultimate object of worship. They believed that Chaitanya was the incarnation of Krishna and Rādhā at the same time.<sup>83</sup> Advaita and Nityananda, the devoted followers of Chaitanya tried their best to propagate the worship of

<sup>79</sup> *H. F. R.*, vol. I, p. 86.

<sup>80</sup> Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of the East Indies*, p. 5.

<sup>81</sup> Alaol, *Tohfa*, pp. 160, 190.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, pp., 157, 170.

<sup>83</sup> T. K. Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

Chaitanya in its simple and pure form. On the other hand, Rupa and Sanatana, who established the centre of Vaishnava learning in Vrindavana, did not encourage the cult of Chaitanya. They wrote volumes of poetry, drama and rhetoric and theological texts in support of the worship of Rādhā and Krishna.<sup>84</sup> This was not because they rejected Chaitanya worship but because they wanted to stop the degeneration of Chaitanya's faith into a mere cult of an *Avatar*. However, by the middle of the seventeenth century, the Bengali biography of Chaitanya by Krishnadas Kaviraj, as well as the zeal of Srinivasa Acarya and Narottama dasa, made the views of the six *Gosvāmins* of Vrindavana accepted as authoritative in Bengal.<sup>85</sup>

Every religion of the world has undergone considerable change and the form in which it first came into existence can nowhere be found with all its original characteristics in the later stage of its development among its more enlightened followers, because change is a necessary condition of growth. The Vaishnava doctrine is not an exception to this law.

In the late sixteenth-century a few literary works like *Rasakadamba*, *Annadabhairava*, *Amrita Vasavali*, *Premavilas* and *Agama* accepted the Godhead of Chaitanya and explained the philosophy of Rādhā and Krishna and the eternal love between them in the land of eternity. This love they referred to as *sahaja*, which means natural or spontaneous. Love is a natural characteristic of the supreme soul, which man possesses by virtue of his birth as a divine inheritance.<sup>86</sup> To explain the nature of

<sup>84</sup>S. K. De, *Early History of the Vaishnava Faith and Movement in Bengal*, p. 165.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>86</sup>M. M. Basu, *The Post Chaitanya Sahajiya cult*, p. 209.

this eternal love the above mentioned literary works analysed human love "Psychologically into all its varieties niceties by the minutest details and it has been found on analysis that divine love can be expressed only through the analogy of the most intense and the most romantic and unconventional love that exists between a man and a woman who become bound together by the ideal of love for love's sake".<sup>87</sup> The seventeenth century Vaishnava literature thus expresses the idea of *Sahajiyā* thought which is *Parakiyā* love. Though *Parakiyā* means "belonging to another", the term *Parakiyā* is ordinarily applied to designate the union of a man and a woman who are not legally married. The post-Chaitanya vaishnavas have changed the aspect of *Parakiyā* by adopting its ideal for a religious purpose—the background of love being insisted upon.<sup>88</sup> The ideal of *Parakiyā* crept into the Vaishnava theology from the legend of the love and amours of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. In the legends Rādhā is not depicted as the wife of Kṛṣṇa, but as the wife of another cowherd. The legend of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa teaches the vaishnavas entire resignation to divine love and this is the spirit in which the vaishnava writers interpret its significance. The Vaishnava *Sahajiyās* believed in the eternal dalliance of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in the highest spiritual land. To them "Every man has within him the spiritual essence of Kṛṣṇa, which is his *Svarūpa* ( real nature ) associated with his lower existence, which is his physical form or *Rūpa*, and exactly in the same way every woman possesses within her a lower self associated with her physical existence, which is her *Rūpa*—but within this *Rūpa* resides the *Svarūpa* of the woman, which is her ultimate nature

<sup>87</sup> B. Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cult*, p. 144.

<sup>88</sup> M. M. Basu, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-21.

as Rādhā”.<sup>89</sup> Thus, in the seventeenth century the post-Chaitanya *Sahajiyā* cult grew with the philosophy of *Parakīyā* love. The vaishnava literature of the mid-seventeenth century indicates how much influence this *Parakīyā* ideal exercised on people within the Vaishnava-fold.

One may assume that the growth of the *Sahajiyā* cult, in the seventeenth century was due to the Vaishnava movement. But M. M. Basu shows that the ideal of *Parakīyā* is as old as the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* and that the custom of women's being associated with men for mystic spiritual culture was in vogue even in the pre-Buddhistic period.<sup>90</sup> In the pre-Chaitanya period the orthodox school regarded *parakīyā* as morally questionable and disapproved of it. But the post-Chaitanya Vaishnavas made some changes of the aspect of *parakīyā* and its ideals,—the purpose being religious.<sup>91</sup> The post-Chaitanya Vaishnava *Sahajiyā* cult, therefore, underwent some changes. Later seventeenth century Vaishnava literature such as *Darpanchandrikā* of Narasinha Das, *Govinda Rati Manjari* of Ghanasyam Das, *Chaitanyatattvasār* of Ramgopal Das, the *Rasamanjari* of Pitambar Das, the *Tattvavilās* of Vrindavana Das are mostly of *Sahajiyā* character. In their writings we also find the idea that “though Radha and Krishna are separate in external appearance, they have but one soul between them. Radha and Krishna form an undivided entity”.<sup>92</sup>

It has generally been supposed that the period between 1558 and 1707 saw the decay of Vaishnavism in Bengal. Though much of the influence of Vaishnavism

<sup>89</sup>S. B. Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

<sup>90</sup>M. M. Basu, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-153.

<sup>91</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 25.

had been lost in course of time, yet it retained a considerable hold upon the masses. The Vaishnava literature which was written in the mid-seventeenth century cannot be ignored. If we take the statistics of religious writings of that period we find that there are 252 vaishnava *nibandhas* or religious texts, 30 *Krishnalīlā Kāvya*s and 60 *Padāvalī*<sup>93</sup> *Kāvya*s.<sup>94</sup>

The post-Chaitanya *Sahajiyā* movement was not without its influence on the society of Bengal. It had considerable effect on the *Bāul* sect. Between 1625 and 1675 *Bāul* mysticism took full form in Bengal.<sup>95</sup> After the coming of the Muslims group of the lower orders of Hindus were converted to Islam. Outwardly they accepted the new religion but in practice they were the *Sahajiyās*. They were the origin of the *fakīrs* of Bengal. According to the earlier *Sahajiyās* "the human body is the microcosm or rather the epitome of the universe and truth resides within and is to be realised within".<sup>96</sup> These *fakīrs*, the followers of the *Sahajiyā* doctrine, in course of time found a doctrine similar to their own in sufism. The *tāriqs* or paths by which a *sūfi* seeks God are "in number as the souls of men". The whole of sufism rests on the belief that "when the individual self is lost, the universal self is found or in religious language, that ecstasy affords the only means by which the soul can directly communicate and become united with God".<sup>97</sup> But the post-Chaitanya *Sahajiyā* movement had a great effect on the Muslim *fakīrs*. The nature of *Sahaja* as it was conceived by the Vaishnava *Sahajiyā*, is

<sup>93</sup> Songs relating to Krishna.

<sup>94</sup> Sukumar Sen, *Bangala Sahityer Itihasa*, vol. I, 393 ff.

<sup>95</sup> U. N. Bhattacharya, *Bangalar Baul O Baul Gan*, p. 289.

<sup>96</sup> S. B. Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

<sup>97</sup> R. A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*, p. 59.

the love between individual beings such as Rādhā and Krishna, but not between the individual and the Absolute—"it is the love between Radha and Krishna that ultimately leads to the realisation of the Absolute".<sup>98</sup> Thus Vaishnava *Sahajiyā* ideas which were assimilated with sufistic ideas gave birth to the *Bāuls* of Bengal. Gradually both Hindu and Muslim *Sādhakas*, with the same modes of *Sāadhanā* merged in the *Bāul* sect.

When a new religious creed is introduced it must have some characteristics of its own, and the *Bāul* creed is no exception. The *Bāuls* refuse to be guided by any canon or convention, social or religious. They conceived *Sahaja* as the innermost eternal Beloved who is the "Man of the heart" (*maner mānuṣ*).<sup>99</sup> "To conform to the emotional approach of the *Bāuls* the *Sahaja* has gradually transformed itself into a Personal God, or the supreme Being with whom it may be possible to have personal relations. This *Sahaja* as the personal God is the "Man of the heart". From this point of view the union of the *Bāuls* with the "Man of the heart" really means the realisation of the *Sahaja* or the ultimate nature of self".<sup>100</sup> The outpouring of the heart through songs was an important religious practice with the *Bāuls*. Their songs reveal the happy mixture of *sūfi* and vaishnava *Sahajiyā* ideas. This mixture of ideas gave its distinctive characteristics to the *Bāul* sect. The creed of the *Bāuls* was based on self-realisation. They wandered about singing of the transitoriness of worldly life.

Though there was no significant development of the Śākta-tāntric cult, it enjoyed a great prestige in the seven-

<sup>98</sup>S. B. Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

<sup>99</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 201.

teenth century of Bengal.<sup>101</sup> There was much influence of Vaishnavism on the Śāktas. Their thought and practice of worshipping the Goddess changed. Love and devotion united into one in their object of worship.<sup>102</sup> Thus we find in Rupnarayan Ghosh's *Durgamangala*, Durga appears as a loving mother goddess. The *Durgamangala* of Bhawani Prasad, and the *Chandikā Vijaya* of Dwija Kamal Lochana and Bhawani Sankar reflect the ideals of Vaishnava "Bhakti". The tender sentiments of Yasoda are to be found reflected in Menoka, mother of Uma in the literature of the Śāktas. The Śākta creeds strengthened themselves by the assimilation of the attractive features of Vaishnavism. The *Chandimangala* or *Durgamangala Kāvya*s were written on the basis of the Markandeya Purāṇa. The goddess Chandī as described in this was generally known as Durga. The main themes of these *Durgamangala Kāvya*s are the descriptions of "great Illusion", i. e. "Mahāmāyā", attachment ( *moha* ) and the ultimate way to salvation. The poets of the *Durgamangala Kāvya*s belonged to east Bengal which indicates, according to T. K. Raychaudhuri, that "the Hindus of East Bengal stuck to the Śākta-tāntric cult."<sup>103</sup> Bengal was also the scene of animated disputes between Śāktas and Vaishnavas. In *Rasik mangala* Midnapore is described as an anti-vaishnava district. There was a *zamindār* named Bhima Sirkar, who lived in the village of Dharanda and who worshipped various deities, but if he saw a vaishnava he would intentionally disrespect him.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>101</sup> S. B. Dasgupta, *Bharater Sakti Sadhana O Sakta Sahitya*, p. 8.

<sup>102</sup> S. B. Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious cult*, p. 207.

<sup>103</sup> T. K. Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

<sup>104</sup> Gopijana Vallava Das, *Rasikmangala*, p. 72.

Generally common people worshipped numerous local deities connected with Mother Goddess. Numerous poems were composed in honour of those deities in the period under review. In the mid-seventeenth century Jayaram Das wrote "*Gangamangal*"<sup>105</sup> in honour of Ganga Devi, goddess of the Ganges". The Hindus found in "the majestic sweep of her course and the sublime music of her water—a divine message and revelation".<sup>106</sup> Sitala, the goddess of smallpox, is the best known and most widely worshipped of the deities who preside over disease. Nityananda Chakravarty's *Sitalā Mangala* shows that though specially connected with smallpox Sitala was also worshipped for immunity from other diseases.<sup>107</sup> Krishnaram wrote a poem in honour of Sasthi Devi in 1687. The worship of this local cult was very popular during the middle of the seventeenth century, as we find in Krishnaram's work that he travelled through Rāḍha, Vanga, Kalinga and Nepal and everywhere he found that the goddess Sasthi Devi was worshipped with great pomp and nowhere in the whole cauntry did he find a city where her cult was so flourishing as at Satgaon.<sup>108</sup> This goddess is the presiding deity of babies. It is her function to preserve little children from falling prey to sickness and premature death. This cult is current in Bengal. Manasa is a malevolent goddess who presides over snake bite. The best and the most popular poem in west Bengal on the legends of Manasa is Ketakadas's *Manasā Mangal*. It was written sometime in the middle of the seventeenth century. Being loved by the masses, the cult grew and acquired popularity.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>105</sup>D.C. Sen, *History of Bengali Language and Literature*, p. 364.

<sup>106</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup>Sukumar Sen, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

<sup>108</sup>D. C. Sen, *op. cit.*, p. 369.

<sup>109</sup>P. K. Maity, *The Early History of the Cult of the Manasa* (an unpublished thesis ), pp. 282-291.



The writers of the *Mangal Kāvya*s aimed at immortalising the popular legends associated with the worship of particular deities, Aryan or local. The literature of the local cults was entirely concerned with the description of their own ritual and with the glorification of their own deities.

The Dharma cult was another popular religious cult. The works of *Dharmamangala* which have been found in west Bengal prove that it was a local cult of that region, and it is still prevalent in some districts of west Bengal. The significant fact of this cult was that it was based on the principle of monotheism, the worship of one God called Dharmathākura. *Dharmathākura*, as described in *Dharmamangala Kāvya*s, has no form, no figure, and is the eternal soul. According to S. B. Dasgupta this description reflects Islamic monotheism.<sup>110</sup> The followers of the Dharma cult even hold Friday as an auspicious day.<sup>111</sup> The *Dharmamangala Kāvya*s clearly indicate that this cult was current among the low class people like the *Hādīs*, *Domas*, *Bagdīs*, Fishermen and carpenters when Manikram Ganguli was ordered by *Dharma* to write *Dharmamangala Kāvya*, he cried in fear, "Being a Brahmin by caste if I sing your song, I shall be expelled from my caste".<sup>112</sup> But *Dharma* assured him that by his grace nothing would happen. This leaves the impression that the *Dharma* cult opposed the caste distinctions of the Hindus. However, the cult of Dharma is also responsible for the rise and growth in Bengal of a type of literature which deserves attention because of its quantitative and qualitative importance. Especially in the mid-seventies, *Dharmamangala* literature flourished to popularise this cult. Sitaram Das

<sup>110</sup> S. B. Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cult*, p. 265.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 266.

<sup>112</sup> S. K. Sen, *op. cit.*, p. 736.

and Syam Pandit were the first writers of *Dharmamangala* poems in our period, but the other poets Ruparam, Khelaram, Manik Ganguly, Ramdas Adak and Ghanaram Chakravarti seem to be more important. The main theme of all the *Dharmamangalas* is the story of Lausen, who prospered by the grace of *Dharma* and vanquished Ichhai Ghose, the follower of a rival deity.

During the early days of the Muslim Conquest Sūfism was an active force in Bengal. Sūfi theosophy had in its origin a great tendency to individualism. At the inchoate stage, sūfism, beyond the comprehension of the common folk preached 'the identification of oneself with soul, through culture'. The sūfis had many schools to preach this thought. Each of these schools composed a *Khāndān* or a family or order. The sūfis established many such orders in India and for want of local support many became extinct.<sup>113</sup> The fundamental ideas of sūfism are God, Man and the relation between them, which is Love. The whole sūfi theosophy twirls on this pivot.<sup>114</sup>

The sūfis were a relatively important factor in Bengal. Muslim saints believed to be endowed with miraculous powers and of unquestioned piety were sent to Bengal from the different sūfi centres of Northern India.<sup>115</sup> "It is in Bengal...that the Muhammadan missionaries in India have achieved their greatest success as far as number are concerned. Here Islam met with no consolidated religious system to bar its progress—in Bengal the Muslim missionaries were welcomed with open arms

<sup>113</sup> Md. Enamul Haq, "The Sūfi movement in India", *Indian Culture*, vol. II, pp. 435-436.

<sup>114</sup> Md. Enamul Haq, "The Sūfi movement in India"—*Indo-Iranica*, vol. III, p. 11.

J. A. Subahan, *Sūfism, its saint and shrines*, p. 67.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

by the aborigines and the low castes on the very outskirts of Hinduism, despised and condemned by their proud Aryan rulers".<sup>116</sup> Thus Sūfism in thirteenth and fourteenth century Bengal very easily and promptly recruited large number of converts.

It is very difficult to say the exact position of sūfism in the mid-seventies because of the paucity of relevant material, but we know from the works of Daulat Qāzi and Alāol that it was still influential in Bengal Muslim society. Although the sūfis of Northern India were divided into fourteen branches at that time four Khān-dāns were generally accepted in Bengal. These are *Chisti*, *Suhrawārdi*, *Naqshbandi* and *Qadiriya*. These four Khān-dāns had considerable influence on our period. But there were certain changes in the doctrine of Sūfism. It is the popular belief in India that the Islam which as a permanent force entered India through Persia and Afghanistan was not pure.

An orthodox muslim believed that the spirit of Islam preached in India was un-Islamic or even idolatrous.<sup>117</sup> But progress is dynamical, therefore change is inevitable. The sūfi doctrine also changed according to this law. Sūfism was dethroned by Pīrism. In seventeenth century Bengal the sūfis took shelter under Pīrism. The Muslim saints came in touch with Hindu saints and fell under the spell of the Sadhu's influence and adopted their customs and practices.<sup>118</sup> However, the masses had considerable faith in the Pīrs. The Sūfi Bayizid of Burdwan, in our period had a great reputation for his piety. Once Azim-ush-shān, grandson of Aurangzib, then

<sup>116</sup>T. W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, p. 229.

<sup>117</sup>T. K. Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

<sup>118</sup>Muzaffar-ud din Nadvi, "Pīrism" (corrupted Sūfism), *Islamic Culture*, vol. IX, pp. 477-481.

*nāzim* of Bengal sent his two sons Sūltan Karimuddīn and Sūltan Farrukhsiyar to invite Sūfi Bayizīd to meet him. On their approach the saint greeted them with the salutation of "Salam Alaikum". Sūltan Karimuddīn assumed the gravity of princely rank, but Farrukhsiyar walking up bare footed, offered respectful salutation and gave his father's message. Sūfi Bayizīd was highly satisfied with the behaviour of Farrukhsiyar and said "Sit down, you are Emperor of Hindustan", and he prayed for Farrukhsiyar. When the saint arrived to meet Azimush-shān, the *nāzim* came forward, made an apology and besought the saints prayer for the attainment of the object which the prince had in view. Sūfi Bayizīd answered "what you seek I have already bestowed on Farrukhsiyar, and now the discharged arrow cannot be recalled".<sup>119</sup> Farrukhsiyar became emperor after the death of Aurangzīb. This proves that not only the common people but also the Royal family believed in the supernatural power of the saints. Thus the Muslim saints, with their reputation of superhuman power and their *Khānqāhs* which were open to the poor and mendicants, exerted great influence on society.

The contact of two civilizations is likely to breed fusion. This fusion was obvious in the ideas and customs of the Hindus and Muslims of Bengal. In Muslim literature the influence of the Hindus is quite noticeable. The muslims too borrowed ideas and themes from Sanskrit. Alāol, a muslim poet of the seventeenth century, eulogized Śiva. Many *Padas* or verses on the popular Rādhā Krishna legend were written in the seventeenth century by Muslim poets. Among the Muslim poets, Nasir Mahmud, Saiyad Marruza, Saiyad Sūltan

<sup>119</sup> *Riyāḍ-al-Salāṭīn*, p. 243.

and Alāol seem to be the most important. No difference is perceivable between the writings of the Muslim Vaishnavas and those of the Hindu Vaishnavas. Alāol's *Padas*<sup>120</sup> clearly indicate how deeply he was influenced by Vaishnavism. In "*Nabivansa*" Sūiyad Sūltan included Hindu deities among the twelve "nabis" or prophets.<sup>121</sup> Similarly, Ketakadas in the introduction to his *Manasāmangal* paid prostrate homage to the Muslim *Pīrs*.<sup>122</sup>

The relation of *Guru* (spiritual guide) and *chelā* (disciple) is still an important feature of Hindu religion. This practice influenced the Muslims also. The maxim like "Darkness turns to light through the Guru's grace" in Alāol's works suggests the Hindu adage describing *Guru* as the person who opens the eyes of the disciple, blinded by ignorance.<sup>123</sup> The worship of "saints" or *Pīrs* in seventeenth century Muslim society seems to be of Hindu origin.

Visiting the tombs of the deceased *Pīrs* who had served the cause of the Faith was common practice among both Hindus and Muslims. The tombs of *Shāh Jālāl* of Sylhet, Panch Pir, *Khāndakar* Muhammad Yusūf of Sonargaon, *Shāh Jālāl Dakhīnī* of Dacca and Adam *Shāhīb* of Vikrampur are shrines for worship.<sup>124</sup> Tradition says that in the sixteenth century one Majlis ṣahīb accompanied his brother Badr Saheb to spread the creed of Islam at Kalna. They were *Pīrs* in the public faith and their tombs, which are still shown, were worshipped by Hindus

<sup>120</sup> Ed. Braja Sundar Sanyal, *Musalman Vaishnava Kabi*, vol. III, p. 25.

<sup>121</sup> J. C. Ghose, *Bengali Literature*, p. 83.

<sup>122</sup> Ketakadas, *Manasāmangal*, p. 7.

<sup>123</sup> T. K. Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

<sup>124</sup> James Wise, "Notes on Sonargaon", *J.A.S.B.* LXIII, pt. III, No. I, p. 370.

and Muslims alike.<sup>125</sup> Ketakadas, in the introduction to his *Manasamangal*, states that Barā Khān was a ruler of Salimbabad *Sarkār* in modern Burdwan district. Two tombs, placed side by side on the banks of the Damodar commemorated the warm friendship between Barā Khān, a muslim and Narayan, a Brahmin. The two friends died in the same battle. They wished to lie side by side after death, and the two burials bear testimony to their last wish. In Salimabād area Barā Khān passed for a *Pir* and as such received great respect from both communities. The tombs of Barā Khān and Narayan are esteemed as holy places. Both the communities visit them with great respect from time to time.<sup>126</sup> The shrines of the numerous *Pirs*, venerated by Hindus and Muslims alike are mentioned with respect in the introductory sections of the medieval *Pāñchālīs*. It was also common among the Hindus to offer *Shirni*<sup>127</sup> at the *dargāh* of the Muslim Saints. The *Ray Mangal* of Krishnadas tells a story about Dakhin Ray, a Hindu deity and Barā Khān Gazi, a *Pir*. It relates the rivalry between Dakhin Ray and Barā Khān Gāzī. Dakhin Ray, the tiger-god is still worshipped in the Sundarban region. The sea-bound merchants offered worship to Dakhin Ray but not to Barā Khān. Over this, a dispute ensued which ended in battle. Tigers formed their armies. Ultimately, the Supreme Being appeared before them in disguise in order to bring about a compromise. One half of his head wore a *gula* ( winnow ), the other half showed a turban with a feather ; a garland of flowers and a rosary of beads hung from his neck. His skin was partly

<sup>125</sup> *Burdwan District Gazetteer*, p. 198.

<sup>126</sup> Ketakadas, *Manasamangal*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>127</sup> An offering of sweetmeats to a deity, especially composed of cornmeal, plantain and sweets mixed with unboiled milk.

fair and partly as dark as a black cloud ; the *Quran* and the *Puran* were held in his two hands.<sup>128</sup> This is a symbol of the cohesion between the Islam and Hinduism of the seventeenth century. Still in 24-Parganas no-one could enter the forest nor could a crew sail through the district without making offerings either to a *Pir's Dargā* or to a Hindu shrine.

There are references to the interchange of ideas and customs among both communities. *Rasik Mangal* a vaishnava biography refers to a Muslim *zamindār* of Alamganj in Midnapore district, who celebrated the Hindu festival of *Dol-Jātrā* in his own territory. Moreover, Rasik made Ahmad Beg, the *Sūbadār* of Midnapore district, his disciple.<sup>129</sup> Even 'Azīm-ush-Shān, the grandson of Aurangzib enjoyed the *Holi* festival in his palace in Bengal, wearing saffron coloured red clothes, and this brought upon him the anger of his grandfather,<sup>130</sup> When Nurūllāh Khān, the *faujdār* of Midnapore, Hijli, Jessore, Hugli and Burdwan, after the death of his father, according to tradition arranged a feast, he invited all the Brahmins and Hindu scholars. The invitations were written in Sanskrit according to Hindu custom. Everything was arranged separately for them in an open square. Various vegetable dishes were made for them, and were cooked by Brahmins and served by them.<sup>131</sup> Thus we find the mutual assimilation of customs and thoughts even in the age of the great orthodox emperor Aurangzib.

The seventeenth century literature of the Bengali Muslims also manifests mutual influence in religion and social customs. It shows that marriage customs on Hindu

<sup>128</sup> S. K. Sen, *History of Bengali Literature*, p. 143.

<sup>129</sup> Gopijanavallabhadas, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

<sup>130</sup> *Riād al-Salāṭīn*, p. 243, *Tawarikh-i-Bangala*, p. 22.

<sup>131</sup> Satish Chandra Mitra, *Jessore Khulnar Itihasa*, vol. II, p. 454.

lines had come to be widely adopted among the Muslim women of east Bengal. They used vermilion on their foreheads as a marriage mark, just as the Hindu women did. To perform the *adhivāsa* or the preliminary rite of marriage in the bridegroom's house, and to receive the bridegroom in the bride's house with special rites by the women were also customary among the Muslims of east Bengal.<sup>132</sup> An orthodox Muslim would look on such practices as un-Islamic. It seems that complete conversion in the rural districts of Bengal left these people only nominal followers of the faith—the great majority of the Muslim population of Bengal being converted from the Hindu society, retained their customs after their conversion. In the *Manasamangala Kāvya*s of our period we find that the well-to-do section of the Hindu community wore turbans ( *Pāgri* ), which formed the distinctive dress of the Muslims. The Hindu *rājās* and *zamindārs* preferred to be dressed like the Muslim aristocracy.<sup>133</sup> The *tilaka* marks on their forehead distinguished them as Hindus.

### *Education :*

In this period Bengal did not possess any organised system of University education. But both the communities had their own institutions for primary as well as higher studies. Contemporary sources refer to *Pāthsālās* and *tols* in many villages or towns of Bengal. It was as now the custom to send a child to the *Pāthsālā* for his primary education at the age of five. Manikram Ganguly describes how Lousen, the hero of the *Dharmamangala Kāvya* had his first lessons at the age of five. First

<sup>132</sup> Ed. Abdul Karim and Sukumar Sen, *Arakan Rejsabhay Bangala Sahitya*, pp. 106-108.

<sup>133</sup> D. C. Sen, *Bangala Bhasa O Sahitya*, p. 156.



he was introduced to the letters of the alphabet and wrote them with a straw on sand.<sup>134</sup> This is called *Hāte Khaḍi*. The ceremony of *Hāte Khaḍi* formed an important and interesting rite when a boy first entered his student life. The course of primary education generally consisted of acquiring a knowledge of the alphabet, knowledge in spelling, reading and a working knowledge of Arithmetic. Generally a *Pāthsālā* would be held in some spacious building attached to a rich man's house. *Tols* were mainly for higher education. The medium of instruction of these *tols* was sanskrit. Ruparam in his *Dharmamangala* poem described the *tol* of the village Admi of Burdwan district, where the best Pandit was Raghuram Bhattacharya.<sup>135</sup> The *tol* consisted of a thatched chamber for the *pandit* or teacher and the class. We find in Ghanaram Chakravarti's *Dharmamangala* that he went to the village *tol* of Rambati in Burdwan, where he learnt *kāvya* ( poetry ), *vyākaran* ( grammar ), *jyotiṣ* ( astronomy ), *chhanda* ( rhetoric ), *nirukta* ( lexicon ), *darśan* ( philosophy ), and also the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Purāṇa*.<sup>136</sup> Ghanaram's *Dharmamangala Kāvya* shows his eloquence in the sanskrit language.

Though primary education was not free, the cost was not at all burdensome. Fees were generally paid in kind. No fee was charged in *tols* but there was the practice of presenting the *Guru* with some gifts on the student's completion of his education.

Navadwipa was the centre of sanskrit learning in the days of Hindu rule, and even in our period it was still the most important educational centre of the region. Its great school of logic was founded by Vasudeva Sarva-

<sup>134</sup> Ghanaram Chakravarti, *Dharmamangala*, p. 128.

<sup>135</sup> Ruparam, *Dharmamangala*, p. 13.

<sup>136</sup> Ghanaram Chakravarti, *op. cit.*, p 17.

bhauma.<sup>137</sup> This institution served as a centre of advanced instruction for logicians. Students and seekers after truth and the grounds of it would resort to it. Raghunatha Siromani was a renowned logician of Navadvipa.<sup>138</sup> In Ruparam's *Dharmamangala* we find that when his teacher Raghuram Bhattacharya was annoyed with him, he asked Ruparan either to go to Navadvipa where there was a galaxy of scholars or to Santipore, where there was no rival of the popular Kanad Bhattacharya.

The new system of logic called *Navya-Nyāya*, supplemented the old system of Gautama. The subtlety with which the *Navya-Nyāya* has been worked out may be regarded as a landmark of progress in human thought.<sup>139</sup> Bengal's Pre-eminence as the centre of *Nyāya* culture was firmly established towards the close of the sixteenth century. *Navya-Nyāya's* basis is a spiritual philosophy but it became rather a secular system of intellectual reasoning. Far too audacious would it be for any one but a specialist to comment on the worth of *Navya-Nyāya* as an intellectual product. T. K. Raychaudhuri shows this by quoting the opinion of Father Pons of Carical, a Jesuit missionary of the eighteenth century who studied the subject with great interest. "It is stuffed with an endless number of questions, a great deal more subtle than useful. It is a chaos of minutiae, as Logic was in Europe about two centuries ago. The students spend several years in studying a thousand varieties of subtleties on the members of the syllogism, the causes, the negotiations, the genera, the species, etc. They

<sup>137</sup> Dayaram, *Saradamangal*, p. 1392.

<sup>138</sup> D. C. Sen, *op. cit.*, p. 409.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 410.

dispute stubbornly on such like trifles and go away without having acquired any other knowledge".<sup>140</sup>

Dayaram's *Saradamangala*, seventeenth century Bengali Work, shows that there was female education in the primary stage. The poet mentions five princesses reading in a *pāthsālā*.<sup>141</sup> In Bharat Chandra's *Vidyāsundar*, we find that princess Vidyā was so highly educated that she even defeated many scholars in literary debates.<sup>142</sup> The *Mangala Kāvya*s of our period show that not only the daughters of *Rājās* and *Zamindārs* were given tuition but also the daughters of middle class people also received education along with the boys in the *Pāthsālā*.

Besides *Pāthsālās* there were other channels through which also the masses could receive a certain amount of enlightenment. Religious songs, *kirtans*, *jātrās*, popular tales and ballads were widely current in society and always served to fill the minds of all classes of people with a certain amount of ethical, aesthetic and intellectual material.

Like the Hindu's *Pāthsālās* and *tols* the Muslims had their *maktābs* and *mādrāssās* for preliminary and higher education. During the early Muslim rule in Bengal the rulers patronized these *mādrāssās* and *maktābs*. The chiefs, *zamindārs* and *jāgīrdārs* followed their example and offered opportunities for study to the poor as well. The *Ulemā* also maintained *mādrāssās* of their own. Some of these *mādrāssās* may have received donations from the imperial court. Rev. Willam Adam, who made a report on the state of education in Bengal in 1835, tried his best to trace the origin of the indigenous schools

<sup>140</sup>T. K. Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

<sup>141</sup>D. C. Sen, *Banga Sahitya Parichaya*, vol. II, p. 1388.

<sup>142</sup>Bharat Chandra, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

of Bengal. He states "The mādrāssā at Kusbeh Bagha<sup>143</sup> is an endowed institution of long standing. The property appears to have been bestowed by two separate royal grants ( *sanads* ). On subsequently examining the documents in the collector's office, I found it to be merely a copy of the original which I saw at Kusbeh. The latter bears what the owner believes to be the autograph of the emperor *Shāh Jahān*, but what is more probable the complexly ornamented impression of His Majesty's seal".<sup>144</sup>

It was very common in Muslim Bengal that landed proprietors should maintain pious men of learning at their own private cost for the benefit of the children of the poor in the neighbourhood. Therefore, the greater number of *maktābs* and *mādrāssās* had their origin in such trusts, founded either by the government or by wealthy chiefs and *zamindārs*.

Generally, most of the *mosques* served as schools and the *Mullas* as teachers. Several *Khānqāhs* of the celebrated *sūfi* scholars also formed seats of learning. The education of the Muslim children began in the *maktāb*, a primary school, attached to every mosque. "When a child is four years, four months and four days old he is initiated formally into the study of letters".<sup>145</sup> This ceremony, which is known as *Bismillāh Khāni* was and is observed all over the subcontinent though with minor variations in the proceedings. Verses from the Quran carefully selected are read out to the child and he is then made to repeat them. Therefore, to a Muslim, the concept of education had always a religious tinge about it and every Muslim parent

<sup>143</sup>It is in the thana of Bilmariya of Rajshahi district.

<sup>144</sup>Rev. W. Adam, *Reports on the State of Education in Bengal*, vol. II, p. 161.

<sup>145</sup>N. N. Law, *Promotion of Learning in India during Mahomedan Rule*, p. 128.

according to his means tried to discharge the religious obligation of educating his children to the very best of his ability.<sup>146</sup> Religious teaching formed the basis of the primary education. Muslim children were taught prayer and ablution in the *maktābs*.<sup>147</sup> Besides religious knowledge both Persian and Arabic were taught in them and the knowledge of arithmetic was an essential part of the primary education.

In the *mādrāsās* the studies usually pursued were grammar, literature, theology and law—all in Persian. In Arabic schools the range of studies was wider. Grammatical works were numerous. Importance was given to the Persian language because of its considerable use in the administrative service. The Hindus also sought to acquire some knowledge of Persian for government service. A number of Persian words was included in Bengali dialects. The importation of foreign words commenced as early as 1203 A.D. when the Muslims invaded Bengal.<sup>148</sup>

The chiefs, the *zamindārs* and the *jagirdārs* patronised not only the *Pāthsālās*, *tols*, *mādrāsās* and *maktābs* but also Bengali literature. Although Bengali culture of the seventeenth century did not find ready patrons in the Mughal *nawābs*, the *Rājās* and *zamindārs* endowed poets and scholars with lands. Jagajivan Ghosal composed *Manasamangal* in obedience to the orders of Raja Durgachandrapati of Dinajpur.<sup>149</sup> Ghanaram Chakravarti the author of *Dharmamangal* referred to the Raja of Burdwan<sup>150</sup> as his great patron. Ketakadas, the famous poet of the seventeenth

<sup>146</sup> A. R. Mallick, *British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal, 1757-1856*.

<sup>147</sup> Mukundaram, *op. cit.*, p. 344.

<sup>148</sup> D. C. Sen, *op. cit.*, p. 381.

<sup>149</sup> Jagajivan Ghosal, *Mansamangal*, Introduction.

<sup>150</sup> Ghanaram Chakravarti, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

century mentioned that Varamalla, the brother of Raja Bishnudas of Vikrampur, gave him three villages to settle in order to pursue his studies. It may be assumed that it was for skill in composing verses that he received the favour of the *Rājā*.<sup>151</sup> The *zamindār* Asadullāh of Birbhum invested half of his income for the support of the learned men and thus encouraged their pursuit of learning.<sup>152</sup> Similarly, the Pathan *zamindārs* of the village Atia in Midnapore district encouraged learned men with remarkable piety and hospitality. Their patronage helped not only the poet Bhawaniprasad Ray and Rupnarayan Ghosh, but also many others. Thus the patronage extended by Hindu and Muslim *zamindārs* resulted in the concentration of scholars in Bengal.

<sup>151</sup> Ketakadas, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>152</sup> *Tawārikh-i-Bangālā*, fol. 31b.

## CONCLUSION

Our survey of the historical materials leads to certain striking conclusions. The imperial dictates had been effective in Bengal ever since the establishment of Mughal sway despite changes of *nāzim*, the policy of the central government had always attempted at centralization. But the fact remains that Mughal rule in Bengal during our period preserved the character of a foreign conquest. The *nawābs* came and went without taking any real interest in the life of the province.

From the political, economic, social and cultural point of view, the functions of the *nawāb* were extensive. His duty was not only to confine himself to administration, but he had to do everything in his power to further the interest of the people. But we find in our period that most of the *nawābs* had their own monopoly businesses—that is they used their official positions to corner the market in some commodity of daily use in great demand and to sell it at exorbitant prices.<sup>1</sup> Salt, sugar and rice were among the necessities of life thus monopolised. An instance of an extraordinary levy of Mir Jumla in Bengal is given by a Dutch record of November, 1661. According to it, Mir Jumla demanded Rs. 50,000 from the grain merchants of Dacca rather like the excess profits tax of modern times, on the pretext that the latter had made a profit of twice the amount, owing to the continued presence of the governor's large camp on the eve of the Kuch Bihar and Assam Campaign.<sup>2</sup> In July 1678, on his return from his first viceroyalty of Ben-

<sup>1</sup> W. Foster, *E.F.I.* ( 1661-64 ), p. 425.

<sup>2</sup> Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 217 ; W. H. Moreland, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

gal, *Shāista Khān* presented Aurangzīb with Rs. 30 lakhs in cash besides four lakhs worth of jewels. In February 1682, *Shāistā Khān* promised to pay five lakhs annually as the tribute of Bengal as long as the emperor was engaged in his Deccan expedition. Jadunath Sarkar observes "Such extravagance could be maintained only by squeezing the people. His ( *Shāistā Khān's* ) subordinates were left free to raise money for him by every means that they could think of ; merchandise was stopped at every outpost and ferry and custom duty changed over and over again in disregard of official permits".<sup>3</sup> It is true that if *Shāistā Khān* had not squeezed his subjects it would not have been possible to send to the central treasury annually five lakhs of rupees which continued till 1685. Although *Shihāb-ud-dīn Talish* declares emphatically that *Shāistā Khān* on his coming to Bengal in 1664 abolished the trade monopolies of his predecessors and the *abwabs* ( cesses ) forbidden by imperial orders it is doubtful whether this measure was effectively implemented. Jadunath Sarkar's following observation deserves consideration, "that *Talish's continuation* stops abruptly in the third year of *Shāistā Khān's* viceroyalty and our author did not live to complete his book or even revise it. It would be reasonable to suppose that *Shāista Khān* did at first issue orders abolishing the monopolies but that after a few years his subordinates took advantage of his supine rule to feed his prodigal luxury by raising money in the old wicked ways and he asked no questions".<sup>4</sup> The cheapness of the price of rice during *Shāistā Khān's* viceroyalty is also open to a question. Eight maunds of rice were sold at one rupee. It is to be borne in mind

<sup>3</sup>*History of Bengal.* vol. II, p. 374.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 375.



that the fertility of Bengal's soil was higher than at the present day. The constant croppings had not yet exhausted the land. Irrigation from the Ganges and its branches made rice the chief crop of the delta. We have seen earlier that Bengal used to export rice to other countries.

Bahādūr *Khān*, a son of Aurangzīb's nurse, who was the immediate successor of *Shāistā Khān* in Bengal, collected 20 million rupees in Bengal in only one year of office.<sup>5</sup> It is too much to believe that French traveller's account that he collected so much money, but it is true that he was recalled by the emperor for his oppressive policy. The emperor was highly displeased with his grandson Azīm-ush-*Shān*'s conduct, who tried to enrich himself by seizing goods at low prices and then selling them in the market at normal prices—a practice called *Saudā-i-Khās* or private business. Aurangzīb ended his letter by calling the prince a fool and a tyrant for practising such spoilation of the people.

As seen earlier, Bengal in this period exported many articles to neighbouring countries and European markets too. This period witnessed the real beginning of the large scale commerce with Europe which was a result of English and Dutch enterprise. It was the lure of trade profits which attracted the English to Bengal in the middle of the seventeenth century—the statistics of this period testify to the fact. The merchants of Bengal carried on a mutually profitable trade with them. But this is not to imply that prosperity was shared by all the sections of society in Bengal. Bernier refers to the popular proverb that there were a hundred gates for gold to enter Bengal, but not one for its exit. If that gold had actually poured into the country, it would have been a golden era of Bengal. But

<sup>5</sup> *Memoir of Francis Martin*. vol. III, p. 50.

unfortunately it only reached the pockets of the monopoly minded *nawābs* and a small number of hangers on of the court.

The English correspondence describes the cotton manufacture of Bengal almost as a national industry. But as most craftsmen were poor, they had to work for merchants, who advanced them money ( *dādani* ) through brokers ( *dāllāl* ) or dealt with them through agents ( *gomasthās* ). This practice of *dādani*, instituted during the Mughal rule, was adroitly exploited by European merchants. Production was thus controlled by them. Poor artisans became a plaything in the hands of the merchants. This fact explains why very little was left to the producers, who were impoverished. There are certain indications in Bengali literature to suggest wide differences in the standard of living among the social groups. Thus we learn from the *Mangal Kāvya*s of the period that whereas the *zamindārs* and rich merchants ate sumptuous food, the common people, in the land of plenty, as Bengal was reasonably called for its enormous production of food crops, fared on rice and vegetables only. In spite of the vast superiority of the manufactures of Bengal, particularly of textile products, it appears that a well balanced economic life had not been attained and that the standard of life of the masses remained low. Both the government and the people appeared to be indifferent to the changes that were taking place in the world outside.

Nevertheless the general condition even of the lower classes could not have been very bad, because prices in general were low. Bernier notices that "the three or four sorts of vegetables which, together with rice and butter ( *soil ghee* ) form the chief food of the common people, are purchased for the merest trifle. Fish of every species, whether fresh or salt, is in the same profusion. In a word

Bengala abounds with every necessary of life ; and it is this abundance that has induced so many Portuguese, half castes and other christians, driven from their different settlements by the Dutch to seek an asylum in this fertile kingdom.”<sup>6</sup>

No metamorphosis, so far our sources inform us, operated upon the social structure of Mughal Bengal in the middle of the seventeenth century.

The frenzy of conversion which broke out in the wake of the Muslim rule in Bengal had subsided considerably in our period. Despite religious animosity and theological differences some of the Muslim writers, who were well versed in the basic tenets of Islam, also reflected the influence of Hindu thought and Hindu beliefs in their writings and this, of course, is no insignificant instance of amelioration of relations between Hindu and Muslim that developed in the mid-seventeenth century. Even within Hinduism the religious offshoots that sprang up under the title of Neo Vaishnavism and subsequently under the name of *Sahajiyā* were no less proselytising and menacing as regards their attitudes to the Brahmins and their Śākta-tantric cult.

Bengal had a traditional and rigid social structure centred on the caste system. The Mughal administration in Bengal accepted the traditional pattern of society. The force that struck terror all over Mughal Bengal was the Portuguese. For decades, these pirates carried death and destruction in Bengal. As they settled down, their zeal for the evangelization of all Bengal induced them to call in the Jesuit Fathers. With the arrival of the missionaries and priests they launched proselytising campaigns resulting in numerous baptisms. We have referred elsewhere to

<sup>6</sup> *Bernier, op. cit.*, pp. 438-39.

the long list of neophytes that the fathers produced after their campaigns. The Portuguese onslaught was no doubt tremendous, but its shock was not sufficient to weaken seriously the social cords that bound the people of Bengal. They were converting to Christianity men who, they believed, had a grievance against the old society. The missionaries were seldom interested in social problems. Perhaps this attitude sprang largely from their conception of the nature of conversion itself. To them conversion was "a great moral transformation," and the most fundamental change possible.

Thus at the time of Aurangazib's death Bengal was at a stage of stagnation. The seeds of the new order had been sown, but it was to germinate in a society still devoted entirely to traditional values, and in a political system which was becoming predatory and inefficient.

## APPENDIX I

### THE ZAMINDARS

No definite information is available to enable us to ascertain either the exact proportion of *zamindāri* land or the number of the *zamindārs* in Bengal during the middle of the seventeenth century. A few *farmāns* of Aurangzib help us to trace some *zamindār* families of Bengal. Local histories and district gazetteers which were written in a later period also serve the purpose of tracing the *zamindārs* of Bengal during the period under review. The paucity of sources concerning this matter is noteworthy, yet in the provincial administrative set up of the Mughals one cannot neglect the territory ruled by the *Rājās* and the *zamindārs*.

Before the advent of the Muslims there were in India various Rajas and chiefs as well as hereditary landlords who came to be known as *zamindārs* in the Muslim period. These *Rājās* and hereditary landlords had a share in the land's produce. Then the Muslims came. According to Islamic law a conqueror was authorised to dispossess infidel occupants and distribute their lands among his followers. But if he permitted the infidels to remain in possession he was entitled to claim from them a share of the produce.<sup>1</sup> This was usually done in India.

In the early years of the Muslim occupation of Bengal, the rulers left the frontier *Rājās* such as those of Bishnupur, Pachet, Tripura and Kuch Bihar, undisturbed in the possession of their estates on their promise to be loyal and to pay tribute to the state. In the days of the Bengal Sultānate the term *zamindār* was applied to a tax gatherer.

<sup>1</sup>*Cambridge History of India*, vol. IV, p. 451.

Within the province tax gatherers such as *Rājā* Ganesh of Dinajpur and Kamsa Narayan of Taherpur gained considerable power and acted much as local chiefs. Hence the term came to have a rather different connotation. Through making contracts with the government for the collection of revenues new *zamindārs* also came into existence. The Afghan rulers favoured the growth of the *zamindāri* system because of their urgent need of the help of the *Rājās* and *Zamindārs* against the Delhi Sultānate. Vaishnava texts such as *Chaitanya Charitamrita*, *Chaitanya Bhagavata*, *Prembilas* etc. refer to Hiranyadas, *zamindār* of Satgaon, Buddhimanta Ray, the *zamindār* of Navadwipa, Haris Chandra Ray, *zamindār* of Jalapantha, Ram Chandra Khan, *zamindār* of Benapal in Jessore, Chani Ray of Rajmahal, and Krishnadas Datta of Kheturi.<sup>2</sup> In the Vaishnava literature there are occasional references to muslim *zamindārs* but none is mentioned by name. During the last days of Afghan rule the *bārabhuiyās*, literally twelve *zamindārs* or landlords, including Pratapaditya and Chand Ray of Jessore, Kedar Ray of Sripur in Vikrampur and Isa Khan of Sonargaon, occupied a place of great importance in the political life of Bengal.<sup>3</sup>

Under the Mughals the *zamindārs* varied so widely in their status and their position in relation to the suzerain power that it is difficult to find one common term to include the whole class. Some of them were almost entirely independent, paying but a nominal allegiance to the emperor. On the other hand there were *zamindārs* large and small who functioned within the

<sup>2</sup>Ed. S. C. Majumdar, *Chaitanya Charitamrita*, pp. 106, 108.

<sup>3</sup>See for fuller discussion N. K. Bhattasali's "Bengal Chiefs" in *Bengal Past and Present*, 1928, 1929.

territories under direct imperial administration which on occasions even interfered in their internal affairs. Under Akbar the frontier *Rājās* remained undisturbed, paying an annual tribute or *peshkash* as a token of submission. But the *bārabhuiyās* were subdued. Except for Jessore, their territories were in part granted to them as their *jāgīrs* and partly divided among numerous petty *zamindārs*. In course of the consolidation of the territory the lands were granted to the various *zamindārs* usually when they accepted vassalage.

In our period the territories of the *Rājās* of Bishnupur, Birbhum, Pachet and Tripura, being protected by dense forests, mountains and hills, lay beyond the direct control of the Mughal power. As frontier chiefs they were of such importance in keeping the borders, that the Mughal *nawābs* treated them rather as allies than as subjects. Even in Murshid Qulī's time according to *Ghulām Husain Salīm*, the *zamindārs* of Birbhum and Bishnupur refused the summons to attend the court of Mursidabad. They were permitted to remain on their estates on condition of regularly remitting their assessment through an agent stationed at Murshidabad.<sup>4</sup>

The frontier *Rājās* were commonly known as *Karad Rājās* (tributary chiefs). They were in fact semi-independent. The *Rājā* of Bana Bishnupur in the Bankura district was one of the old tributary chiefs who continued their existence throughout the Afghan and Mughal period. The country over which this *Rājā* ruled is called Malla-bhum. To the north it is believed to have stretched as far as the Santal *parganās*, to the south it comprised part of Midnapore and to the east part of Burdwan, and on the west it included part of Chota Nagpur.<sup>5</sup> During the

<sup>4</sup> *Riyāḍ-al-Salāṭīn*, p. 253.

<sup>5</sup> Report of Archaeological Survey of India, vol. VIII, p. 150.

early rule of the Mughals the *Rājā* of Bishnupur did not pay any *peshkash*. Only in 1658, according to *Shāh Shujā's* new revenue settlement of Bengal, an amount of tribute was fixed for the Bishnupur *zamindār*.<sup>6</sup>

Another great *zamindāri* existing from the time of the Mughal conquest, was that of Birbhum. After Akbar's accession Ranmast *Khān*, having been given the duty of defending the frontier, enjoyed Birbhum as his *jāgīr*.<sup>7</sup> Although a fixed regular amount of *peshkash* was also demanded from the *zamindār* of Birbhum in 1658, there was no regularity in its payment. Birbhum was the chief Muslim *zamindāri* of Bengal during the period under review.

Before the Muslim conquest of Bengal the Rajput *Rājās* of Pachet<sup>8</sup> in *sarkār* Mandaran was independent. After the Muslim conquest he remained semi-independent frontier Raja of Bengal. In the *Pādishanāma* of Abdul Hamīd Lāhorī, it is stated that Bir Narayan, a commander of 300 horse, was the *zamindār* of Pachet, which was attached to the Suba of Bihar.<sup>9</sup> There is no record of his liability to tribute or revenue. But in the improved rent roll of *Shāh Shujā*, Pachet is shown as liable to a *peshkash* or fixed tribute.<sup>10</sup>

The Hindu *Rājās* of Tripura were independent from ancient times to the last days of Afgan rule. During the viceroyalty of *Shāh Jahān* Tripura was annexed to Bengal<sup>11</sup>; it was then known as the *sarkār* of Udaipur and a fixed amount of revenue was also drawn from it.

<sup>6</sup>Firminger, *Fifth Report*, vol. I, p. 247.

<sup>7</sup>M. N. Chakravarti, *Birbhum Vivaran*, p. 20.

<sup>8</sup>Pachet is in modern Manbhum district.

<sup>9</sup>Elliot and Dowson, *History of India*, vol. VII, p. 236.

<sup>10</sup>Firminger, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

<sup>11</sup>*Bahārtistān-i-Ghaybi*, vol. II, pp. 554-55.



The *zamindārs* large and small, under direct imperial administration were no less important than the tributary chiefs. Their relations with the Mughal government were more or less of the same kind as those of the tributary chiefs. But there were some variations in the extent and nature of their obligations as well as of their privileges.

The ordinary *zamindārs* had to pay their revenue to the governor. Though their contribution was fixed, it was not known as *peshkash*. According to the *Āin-i-Akbarī*, the *zamindārs* of the *sarkārs* of Sulaimanabād, Satgaon and Mandaran used to pay yearly revenue including customs of 43,758,088 dams or Rs. 1,093,952.<sup>12</sup> An old *sanad* which is kept in the Natore Raj family of Rajshahi reveals that in 1704 Aurangzib conferred the *zamindāri* of Bhaturia in Chāklā Ghoraghat on Balaram, the *zamindar* of Satail, for a fixed annual payment to the state of Rs. 2,53,246.<sup>13</sup>

The order of conferment of *zamindāri* in the case of an ordinary *zamindār* proved the imperial control over him and distinguished him from the tributary chief who had hereditary right on his *zamindāri*. When a *zamindāri* was conferred the *zamindār* was asked to pay revenue regularly. If he failed to pay he was deposed and replaced. In the early seventeenth century Mymensingh was held by one Muhammad Mandi of Tikara in Atia *parganā*. During an invasion by the King of Assam in 1637 many villages were desolated and the Mandi family failed to pay the revenue, whereupon in 1657 the *nawāb Shāh Shūjā'* transferred the *parganā* to a certain Datta of Mangalsidhi.<sup>14</sup> In the same period one Daulat Ghāzi held the estate of Jaydebpur in Dacca. He

<sup>12</sup> *Ā'in-i-Akbari* (Jarrett), II, p. 140.

<sup>13</sup> Prabhas Chandra Sen, *Bagura Itihasa*, p. 259.

<sup>14</sup> L. S. S. O'Malley, *Mymensingh District Gazetteer*, p. 155.

failed to exercise proper supervision over his affairs and his revenue was often in arrears. *Shāh Shujā'* deprived him of the *zamindāri* and transferred it to three of his Hindu servants, Balaram, Krishnaram and Balsana Ghose. Balaram was succeeded by his son Srikrishna and the *sanad* dated A.D. 1683 confirming him in the *zamindāri* is still preserved in the family archives.<sup>15</sup> The legend goes that during Aurangzib's reign the reigning Raja of Susang in Mymensingh district stopped the payment of tribute. He was taken prisoner to Murshidabad and compelled to embrace the Muhammadan faith under the name of Abdul Rahim and marry a Muhammadan girl.<sup>16</sup> We shall see later how the *zamindāris* of Udainarayan of Rajshahi and Sitaram Ray of Mahmudpur *parganā* were confiscated and given to others. The genealogy of the Nadia Raj family tells us that though Raja Ramchandra of Nadia had the favour of the *nawāb* 'Azim-ush-shān he was taken to Dacca and put in prison as a revenue defaulter.<sup>17</sup>

Of the principal *zamindāris* of Bengal that of Burdwan, situated in *sarkār* Sharifabad, was among the most famous. The founder of the Burdwan Raj family was one Samgram Ray, a Khattri Kapur of Kotli Lahore. At the end of the sixteenth century Samgram Ray, on his way back from a pilgrimage to Puri, much taken with the advantages of Vaikunthapur, a village near the town of Burdwan, settled there and devoted himself to commerce, and money lending. Abu Ray, the grandson of Sangram Ray, supplied the Mughal troops with provisions at a critical time. As a reward he was appointed *Chaudhūri* and *Kotwāl* of Rakhabi Bazar in the town in 1657, under

<sup>15</sup> L. S. S. O'Malley, *Dacca District Gazetteer*, p. 184.

<sup>16</sup> L. S. S. O'Malley, *Mymensingh District Gazetteer*, p. 166.

<sup>17</sup> *Navadwipadhipati Maharaj Krishnachandrar Bamsabali*, p. 4.

the *faujdār* of Burdwan. His son Babu Ray owned the *parganā* of Burdwan and Babu Ray's son obtained three more estates. Babu Ray's grandson, Krishnaram Ray, acquired the *parganā* of Senpahari. In 1689 Aurangzib's *farmān* honoured him and in the titles of *zamindār* and *chaudhūri* of the *parganā* of Burdwan.<sup>18</sup> After the revolt of Sova Singh, Jagatram Ray was restored to the estate of his father and he received the rebellious Sova Singh's estate as well. Thus the Burdwan estate comprised 57 *parganās*. Jagatram was honoured with a *farmān* by the emperor Aurangzib.

According to legend Bhattanarayan, the chief of the five Brahmans who were brought to Bengal from Kanauj by the King Adisura, laid the foundation of the Nadia Raj family. At the time of the Muhammadan invasion of Bengal Kasinath, a descendant of Bhattanarayan, fled but he was captured and put to death. Kasinath's wife and son settled at Fatkabari which is supposed to have been situated between Plassey and Jalangi on the banks of the river Jalangi. Kasinath's grandson, Durgadas became the favourite of a certain Mughal chief, whose name is not known, for his courage. Durgadas was appointed *qānūngo* of Hugli. On the recommendation of that chief the emperor Akbar conferred upon Durgadas the title of *Mazumdār*<sup>19</sup> Bhabananda. Bhabananda helped Mansingh who was trying to bring to subjection, the rebel Raja Pratapaditya of Jessore. Bhabananda in return expressed his wish to be re-instated in his ancestral possessions. Mansingh took him to Delhi. He brought to the emperor's notice the services rendered by Bhabananda

<sup>18</sup>Rakhal Das Mukhopadhyaya, *Burdwan Rajvamsanucharit* (An account of the genealogy of Burdwan Raj family.) There is a Bengali translation of original *farmān* on p. 5.

<sup>19</sup>Majumdar means treasurer.

in the expedition against Pratapaditya. The emperor Akbar was pleased with him, restored to him his ancestral possessions and conferred on him the title of Maharaja.<sup>20</sup> This happened at the end of the sixteenth century. Bhabananda's descendant Ramkrishna received from the prince 'Azim-ush-shān valuable support in the discharge of his duties. 'Azim-ush-Shān reported to the emperor the services rendered by Ramkrishna against Sova Singh.<sup>21</sup> Consequently the favour he enjoyed at the court of Delhi established his power on a solid foundation.

During the early Mughal period a great part of Rajshahi later known as Putia *parganā* was under one Lashkar Khān who called the city Lashkarpur after his own name. Lashkar Khān was subdued by Man Singh who offered the *zamindāri* to one Batsacharya, a pious man. Though Batsacharya refused to accept it, his son Pitambar was subsequently given the land of Lashkarpur. Pitambar died without issue and his estate passed to his brother Nilambar, on whom the emperor Jahāngīr is said to have conferred the title of *Rājā*.<sup>22</sup> Nilambar's son received as a gift half of the Tahirpur *parganā* from one of the old Rajas of Tahirpur, and this greatly added to the extent of the *zamindāri*. Darpanarayan was the *zamindār* of the Lashkarpur *parganā* or Putia estate during the mid-seventeenth century. When Murshid Qulī Khān was the *dīwān* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Darpanarayan's son Udai Narayan was the *zamindār*. Udai Narayan had charge of the revenue collections of the *Khālsā* lands of the Rajshahi district in the early eighteenth century.<sup>23</sup> In course of time Udai Narayan

<sup>20</sup> L. S. S. O' Malley, Nadia District Gazetteer, p. 157.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>22</sup> *Bengal Past and Present*, 1928, vol. XXXV, p. 36.

<sup>23</sup> *Riyāḍ-al-Salāṭīn*, p. 256.

became very powerful, defied the authority of the *nawāb* Murshid Quli Khān and revolted. Murshid Quli immediately brought the revolt under control and Udai Narayan lost his life in action.<sup>24</sup> After this the *zamindāri* of Rajshahi was divided, one portion was assigned to Ramjivan and his brother Raghunandan ; the latter had formerly been the *diwān* of the Lashkarpur estate at the court of Murshidabad ; the other portion went to a certain Kali Kunwar.<sup>25</sup> Ramjivan and Raghunandan gradually extended their estate, which became one of the greatest in Bengal in the eighteenth century. These two brothers were the founders of the famous Natore Raj family in Rajshahi.

After the fall of the Jessore Raj Pratapaditya in the sixteenth century the portion of his territory lying within the Khulna district appears to have been parcelled out among a few large *zamindārs*. One of these was Bhabeswar Ray and his son Mahatap, whom Khān Azīm, *nawāb* of Bengal ( 1582-84 ), rewarded for their services against Pratapaditya by a grant of land comprising the *parganās* of Saidpur, Amidpur, Budagacha and Manikpur in the Khulna district. One of Mahatap's descendants, Manohar Ray ( 1649-1705 ), during his life acquired one *parganā* after another. He was given authority to collect and pay in the revenue of the smaller estates in his neighbourhood and he gradually acquired a large property by paying up arrears when the small *zamindārs* defaulted, taking their lands in exchange.<sup>26</sup> Thus Manohar Ray extended the limits of his *zamindāri* until it comprised nearly all the *parganās* of Khulna and Jessore districts.

<sup>24</sup> Tawārikh-i-Bangālā, fol. 376b.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 38 a.

<sup>26</sup> S. G. Mitra, *op. cit.*, pp. 486-87.

In the later years of Jahāngīr's reign one Bishnu Datta became provincial *Qānūngo* and stayed at Dinajpur. His son Srimanta acquired the *zamindāri* of Dinajpur from *Shāh Shujā'*. In course of time the *zamindāri* of Dinajpur became one of the largest. At the time of Murshid Quli Khān's new settlement of revenue in 1722, Dinajpur estate comprised 89 *parganās*.<sup>27</sup>

During the reign of *Shāh Jahān* Raghab Datta Rai-chaudhuri of Patuli in Burdwan district was given the title of *Chaudhūri* and received a *zamindāri* of twenty one *parganās* lying mostly in *sarkār* Satgaon. For the management of this property he made the village of Bansberia in Hugli district his headquarters. Raghab Datta's son Rameswar was rewarded by the emperor Aurangzib for his services in attaching defaulting *zamindārs* and making assessments thereof with five dresses of honour and the hereditary title of *Raja Mahasay* by a *sanad* dated 1679.<sup>28</sup> In the same year, by another *sanad*, he was granted 400 bighas of land for his residence and the *zamindāri* of twelve more *parganās*.

The *zamindāri* of Idrakpur or Aurangābād in the *sarkār* of Ghoraghat was in the possession of one Bhagaban, a Kayastha by caste. *Zamindār* Bhagaban's inefficiency in controlling his *zamindāri* gave an opportunity to his *diwān* Bhagaban (referred to by the same name as his master) who gradually acquired the whole *zamindāri*. At last Raghunath, the *zamindār's* grandson, applied to the emperor Aurangzib to recover it. By a *sanad* of Aurang-

<sup>27</sup> Kaliprasanna Bandyopadhyaya, *Banglar Itihasa*, p. 489.

<sup>28</sup> H. Beveridge translated the original Persian *sanad* in 1902 with the permission of Sir John Woodburn, M.A., K.C.S.I., then President of Asiatic Society of Bengal—referred to by Ambikacharan Gupta, who has seen the original *sanad*, in *Hugli or Dakshin Rarh*, p. 212.

zib in 1669 Raghunath obtained nine-sixteenths of the *zamindāri* of Idrakpur.<sup>29</sup> The other portion which belonged to *dīwān* Bhagaban came under the estate of Dinajpur. In 1674 another *farmān* of Aurangzib conferred on Raghunath's grandson Hariunath the *zamindāri* of his grandfather.<sup>30</sup>

Sitaram Ray, a *zamindār* of *parganā* Mahmudabad in the Chāklā of Bhusna, was a contemporary of *dīwān* Murshid Qulī Khān. There are three temple inscriptions of his dated 1699, 1703 and 1704.<sup>31</sup> Sitaram's father was a petty tax-gatherer under the *faujdār* of Bhusna. It appears from the date of the inscriptions that Sitaram obtained the *zamindāri* of the *parganā* of Mahmudabād towards the end of the seventeenth century. Sheltered by forests and rivers, Sitaram erected a fortress in his *zamindāri*, and gradually became powerful. This *zamindār*, who is described by Salimallāh as a dacoit,<sup>32</sup> and by Ghulām Husain Salim as a rebel,<sup>33</sup> defied the imperial authority and stopped paying revenue. A battle ensued between Sitaram and the imperial forces sent by Murshid Qulī Khān. At last Sitaram Ray was captured with his family and was executed in 1713. His *zamindāri* was transferred to Ramjivan Ray, the founder of the Natore Raj family.

Besides these *zamindārs* there are references to petty *zamindārs* who acquired *zamindāris* of two or three *parganās*. Among them we may mention a Rajput named Hazari

<sup>29</sup>In 1781 when Mr. Goodlad, a servant of the East India Company, sent a report about Bengal to the Court of Directors, he mentioned the *zamindāri* of Idrakpur and referred to the *farmāns* of Aurangzib which he had seen himself.—Prabhas Chandra Sen, *Bagurar Itihas*, vol. I, p. 121.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup>S. C. Mitra, *op. cit.*, p. 542.

<sup>32</sup>*Riāḍ-al-Salāṭīn*, pp. 263-64.

<sup>33</sup>*Tawārikh-i-Bangālā*, fols. 49-61.

Keshab Malla who came to Bengal with Todar Mal in 1580. Keshab Malla's two sons, Bharamall and Bishnudas, settled in Vikrampur, a suburb of Dacca. They obtained the title of Raja in later period.<sup>34</sup> *Bahāristān-i-Ghaybī* refers to Barkhurdār, *zamindār* of Alaipur,<sup>35</sup> south east of Putia in Rajshahi district. Binod Rai, *zamindār* of Chandpratap in Manikganj subdivision of Dacca district, and Raja Rai, *zamindār* of Shahbaspur in Pabna district.<sup>36</sup> The founder of Mahisadal *zamindāri*, which formed a part of Qiamat Maljiyata<sup>37</sup> in the rent roll of *Shāh Shujā'*, was one Busia Ray Mahapatra. His sixth descendant Kalyan Rai fell into arrears of revenue and furnished as security one Janardan Upadhyaya. Janardan ultimately ousted Kalyan Ray and himself became *zamindār* of Mahisadal.<sup>38</sup>

After the conquest of Chittagong in 1666 a detachment of the imperial troops under the charge of Sangram Singh was encamped on the bank of the river Meghna to oppose the Maghs and Firingis. Eventually Sangram Singh ousted the Maghs from Bengal. The emperor Aurangzib conferred on him as a reward the *zamindāri* of *parganā* Bhusna and Mahmudpur and on his assistant Ghani Ray the *parganā* of Shabajpur in the Faridpur district.<sup>39</sup>

In 1902 at the annual meeting of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, an original Persian *sanad* of Aurangzib, dated, 1673, was shown to Sir John Woodburn, then president of the Asiatic Society. It was addressed to Rameswar Ray

<sup>34</sup> Ed. J. M. Bhattacharya, *Ketakadas's Manasa Mangal*, Introduction, p. 14.

<sup>35</sup> *Bahāristān-i-Ghaybī*, vol. I, p. 123.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>37</sup> See *Supra*, p. 10.

<sup>38</sup> L.S.S.O' Malley, *Midnapore District Gazetteer*, p. 203.

<sup>39</sup> Ananda Nath Ray, *Faridpur Itihasa*, vol. I, p. 72.



of Sheoraphuli. The *sanad* starts thus "As you have promoted the great interest of government in getting possession of *parganās* and making assessment thereof, and as you have performed with care whatever services were entrusted to you, you are entitled to reward. The *Khilāt* of *Pānjā Parchā* ( dresses of honour ) and the title of *Rājā Mahāsaya* are therefore given to you in recognition thereof, to be inherited by the eldest children of your family, generation after generation, without being objected to by any one.<sup>40</sup> Raja Rameswar was thus founder of the Sheoraphuli Raj family in *sarkār* Satgaon. He founded several *tols* or Sanskrit schools and built a finely carved brick temple of Vishnu.

Numerically however the *zamindārs* of the Kāyastha caste appear to have predominated. The Kāyasthas by their long experience in revenue matter attracted the Muslim rulers. They even learned Persian and very soon acquired a good knowledge of it. In recognition of their talent the Muslim rulers appointed them in the revenue department.<sup>41</sup> Thus revenue service of the Muslim rulers of Bengal was mostly manned by Kāyasthas. The Mughals also followed the same practice. Hence the *zamindāri* and revenue collection remained in the hands of the Kāyasthas during the period under discussion.

It may be asked what was the relation between the *zamindārs* and the government? What was their legal status? No definite answer can be obtained because the material at our disposal does not throw any light on it. Theoretically land belonged to the sovereign. But during the Mughal period *zamindāri* had tended to become hereditary. The history of *zamindāri* development in

<sup>40</sup> *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1902, p. 45. Basanta Kumar Basu, *Srirampur Mahakumar Itihasa*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>41</sup> N. N. Basu, *Banger Jatiya Itihasa*, vol. I, p. 101.

Bengal shows that the *zamindār* was removable only by force. So long as the government received regular payments, the *zamindārs* retained their *zamindāris*. The question of deposition only arose in case of non-payment of revenue and rebellious conduct. Therefore the *zamindār's* relation with the government was confined to payment of revenue.

In other parts of India such as in Delhi, Allahabad and Gujarat we find that there were *r'āyati* villages and *zāmindāri* villages. In *r'āyati* or peasant-held villages the *zamindār* had no proprietary rights on the land.<sup>42</sup> In Gujarat the *zamindāri* village was divided into two kinds—*bānth* and *tālpad*. The *zamindārs* themselves enjoyed the revenue from the *bānth* villages whereas the government collected the revenue from the *tālpad* villages.<sup>43</sup> But in Bengal we find that even the petty *zamindārs* paid a fixed amount of money to the government. After paying this sum the *zamindārs* in Bengal had in fact right to collect their share from the peasants.

The work of collecting revenue brought the *zamindārs* into close contact with the peasants, who were in fact dependent on the *zamindārs* in many ways. The *zamindārs* often lent money to the *r'āyats* to promote cultivation. The *r'āyat* would have to pay back with interest and sometimes his crop might be seized as soon as the corn in the field was ready for harvest to forestall the debtor-tenant from escaping without paying.<sup>44</sup>

The petty landholders even appear in the literature of the period as *Rājās* and they were almighty within their own sphere of authority. A *zamindār's* oppression forced

<sup>42</sup>Irfan Nabib, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>44</sup>Mukundaram, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

people long settled in a locality to quit and seek new homes <sup>45</sup> But there is no evidence in our period to show that the *r'āyats* complained against the *zamindār* to the *nawāb* or the emperor. As for the judicial power of the *zamindārs* it is very difficult to ascertain their exact position. Though we have no particular evidence to show how far *zamindārs* had the right to decide cases, we can agree with James Westland that "they or rather their subordinates also had a good deal to do with the adjudication of petty disputes, whether of a criminal or of a civil nature."<sup>46</sup> But it may be assumed that cases involving religion or any other serious matter went to the *Qāzī's* Court, otherwise the appointment of a district *Qāzī* would have been pointless. However, the *zamindār* had considerable authority over the peasants beyond the collection of taxes. They were not merely tax-collectors, as we find them in the late eighteenth century.

If the *zamindārs* had the right to administer their territories what was the purpose of appointing Mughal officers in the *Sarkārs* and in the *parganās*? The chief duties of the Mughal officers were to keep an eye on the *zamindārs*, to ensure the regular payment of revenue by them and to prevent them from erecting forts in their respective territories and from conspiring against government. The government secured the benefits of a continuity of administration. The *zamindāri* system had thus certain advantages to the government. But it had disadvantages too. As the government received regular payment the *zamindārs* were left free to manage their internal affairs as they wished, for nowhere do we find evidence of any interference of government officials

<sup>45</sup>Ketakadas, *op. cit.*, p. 45, Mukundaram, *op. cit.*, pp. 39, 43.

<sup>46</sup>James Westland, *Jessore*, p. 52.

in the internal administration of the *zamindārs'* territories. In consequence the *zamindārs* freely exploited the peasantry and levied extra imposts. The records of the English factory at Hugli state that the English sent five boats from Hugli to Patna. They paid four annas for each boat to the *Mīrbahār*. When the boats were passing through one *zamindār's* territory, he stopped them. The English could not succeed in getting their boats released in spite of the customs superintendent's order. They paid eight annas for each boat as *Gautbāra* which the *zamindār* claimed as his due. Such evidence shows that the *zamindārs* were even free to levy duties on trade passing through their territories. Another great disadvantage of *zamindari* was that as the *zamindārs* enjoyed autonomy within their territories, this sometimes led them to defy the imperial authority, as is shown by the rebellion of Sova Singh, the *zamindār* of *parganā* Chitua and Barda in the Midnapore district, and that of Sitaram Ray of *parganā* Mahmudpur.

# APPENDIX II

## THE ENGLISH EAST INDIA COMPANY'S ORDER FOR SILK, TAFFETA, ETC.<sup>1</sup>

TABLE I

<i>Year</i>	<i>Taffeta</i>	<i>Raw silk</i>	<i>White silk</i> <sup>1</sup>	<i>Florata</i> <sup>2</sup>
1660	15,000 pieces	50 bales <sup>3</sup>		
1661	18,000 "			
1662	18,000 "			
1663	18,000 "			
1664	18,000 "			
1668	2,000 "	50 bales		
1669	43,000 "			
1671	6,000 "			
1673	— —	400 to 500 bales	40 bales	40 bales
1674	49,000 "	" " "	"	"
1675	40,000 "	500 bales	50 to 60 bales	50 "
1677	40,000 "	600 "	200 bales	100 "
1678	43,000 "	600 "	200 "	100 "
1679	47,200 "	1200 "	—	—

TABLE II

<i>Year</i>	<i>Taffeta</i>	<i>Raw silk</i>	<i>Silk rumals</i>
1680	73,000 pieces	2,110 bales	20,000 pieces
1681-82	73,000 "	13,710 "	50,000 "
1682-83	123,000 "	11,200 "	80,000 "
1683-84	—	1,630 "	—
1686-87	40,000 "	1,400 "	73,000 "
1687-88	27,000 "	382 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	48,000 "
1688-89	30,000 "	1,400 "	—
1689-90	30,000 "	1,400 "	80,000 "

<sup>1</sup>The figures have been compiled from the letter Books, No. II, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X.

<sup>2</sup>Printed silk.

<sup>3</sup>143 lbs. = 1 bale.

THE ENGLISH COMPANY'S TOTAL<sup>4</sup> EXPORT OF RAW AND WROUGHT  
SILK AS WELL AS OTHER COMMODITIES FROM BENGAL

TABLE III

Year	Wrought silk	Raw silk
1698	57,269 lbs	36,534 lbs.
1699	24,445 "	16,931 "
1700	116,455 "	85,242 "
1701	115,504 "	40,217 "
1702	10,518 "	330,755 "
1703	21,785 "	396,887 "
1704	73,033 "	—
1705	—	—
1706	39,340 "	67,567 "
1707	3,220 "	19,751 "

TABLE IV

Other commodities	Years				
	1679	1680	1681	1682	1683
	<i>Pieces</i>	<i>Pieces</i>	<i>Pieces</i>	<i>Pieces</i>	<i>Pieces</i>
Coloured <sup>5</sup> gingham	10,000	10,000	15,000	20,000	20,000
Cossas <sup>6</sup>	10,000	10,000	13,000	26,000	26,000
Mulmulls <sup>7</sup>	8,000	8,000	13,000	46,000	30,000
Nillas <sup>8</sup>	14,000	14,000	18,000	40,000	36,000
Fine humhums <sup>9</sup>	5,000	5,000	8,000	20,000	10,000
Mahmudbanies <sup>10</sup>	100	1,000	1,500	500	.....
Allabannes <sup>11</sup>	200	200	300	2,000	.....
Shotar	200	.....	.....	.....	.....
Charcannes <sup>12</sup>	1,000	1,000	1,500	5,000	.....
Sannoos <sup>13</sup>	10,000	.....	25,000	30,000	40,000
Addaties <sup>14</sup>	.....	200	600	.....	.....

<sup>4</sup>Bal Krishna, *op. cit.*, pp. 309-311.

<sup>5</sup>See *Supra*, p. 180. <sup>6</sup>*Ibid.* <sup>7</sup>Muslins.

<sup>8</sup>See *Supra*, p. 180. <sup>9</sup>*Ibid.* <sup>10</sup>Fine muslin.

<sup>11</sup>"Perhaps from ā ( ā, superior, bānā ) woof"—Hobson Jobson p. 707.

<sup>12</sup>Check muslin. <sup>13</sup>See *Supra*, p. 179.

<sup>14</sup>A kind of 6" wide piece goods.

TABLE IV ( Contd. )

Commodities	Years				
	1679	1680	1681	1682	1683
	<i>Pieces</i>	<i>Pieces</i>	<i>Pieces</i>	<i>Pieces</i>	<i>Pieces</i>
Photaes <sup>15</sup>	.....	200	300	2,000	.....
Elatches <sup>16</sup>	...	200	5,300	2,000	.....
Amereo	.....	200	300	1,600	.....
Peniascoes <sup>17</sup>	.....	200	1,000	3,000	.....
Cherklaies <sup>18</sup>	.....	.....	3,000	8,000	.....
Sonsaes <sup>19</sup>	.. ..	.....	2,000	8,000	..
Atlas <sup>20</sup>	.....	.....	4,500	9,000	.....
Striped cotton stuff	.....	.....	1,000	10,000	.....
Puttaes <sup>21</sup> plain	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
and striped	.....	.. ..	5,000	2,000	.....
Arundee <sup>22</sup>	.....	.....	.....	1,000	.....
Lungis <sup>23</sup>	.....	.....	.....	20,000	20,000
Tanjeebs <sup>24</sup>	.....	...	.. ..	.....	16,000
Seerband <sup>25</sup>	.....	.....	.....	..	15,000

<sup>15</sup>Loinbands.<sup>16</sup>A kind of cloth woven of silk and thread so as to present the appearance of cardamoms ( alāchi ),<sup>17</sup>Stuffs made of pineapple fibre.<sup>18</sup>A kind of cloth made of silk and cotton.<sup>19</sup>"Good plain calico, especially liked for its breadth which was sometimes as much  $1\frac{1}{2}$  yds."—*Hobson Jobson*, p. 708.<sup>20</sup>See *Supra*, p. 180.<sup>21</sup>A Special kind of cotton cloth.<sup>22</sup>"It was made neither with cotton nor silke; but of a kind of Herba spun by a worm that feeds upon the leaves of a stelke or tree called Arundee which bears a round prickly berry of which oyle is made; It will never come white, but will take and colour".—*Hobson-Jobson*, p. 581.<sup>23</sup>See *Supra*, p. 180.<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*<sup>25</sup>Seerband generally means turbans but J. P. Taylor classified Dacca muslins under the names of Seerband. The figures of Table IV have been compiled from Letter Books, Nos : IV, pp. 30 -403, VI, p p. 25, 37, 38, 101, 131, 132, 412-4 4, VII, pp. 22-26, 246-250,

TABLE V

<i>Year</i>	DUTCH ORDER FOR BENGAL SILK <sup>26</sup>		
1653	—	429,000 lbs.	
1654	—	200,000 "	
1655	—	100,000 "	
1656	—	50,000 "	
1670	—	40,000 "	to 60,000 lbs
1680	—	60,000 "	to 80,000 "
1686	—	136,000 "	

TABLE VI

<i>Year</i>	DUTCH EXPORT OF SILK FROM BENGAL <sup>27</sup>		
1698	—	72,191 lbs.	
1699	—	142,189 "	
1700	—	133,867 "	

<sup>26</sup>K. Glamann, *op. cit.*, p. 125.<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 127.



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